Cover Image By Roberto F Castro

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Sketchbook of **James Wolf Strehle**

The Gallery
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SCI-FI CUSTOM BRUSHES

Roberto F Castro brings us the forth part in our **Sci-Fi Custom Brush tutorial series** by showing us how to create elements found in a futuristic corridor
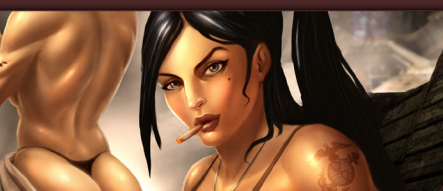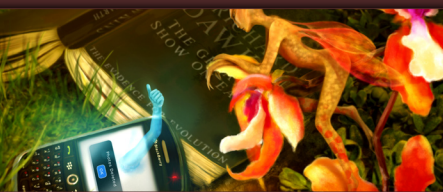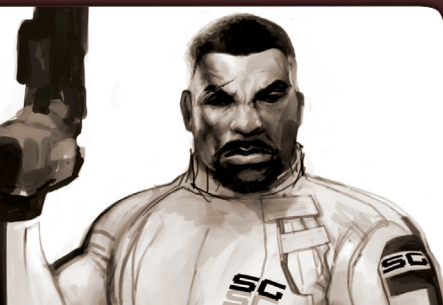
Concept Art for Games
Bart Tiongson shows us how to create character concepts in the forth chapter of our **Concept art for Games** tutorial series.

Painting Creatures From Folklore
Nykolai Aleksander shows how she created he own interpretation of faeries in the second chapter in this tutorial series.

Superhot Female Marines
Alex Ruiz paints some battle hardened female marines in the forth chapater in our **Painting Futuristic marines** series.

Contents

Editorial

Hello and welcome to the October issue of 2DArtist. If you are anything like me you are already wondering where the nice sunny days have gone, and are slowly getting depressed by the short days and dark nights. But it's not all doom and gloom, if you are stuck inside what is there better to do than sit down with the new issue or 2DArtist and be inspired.
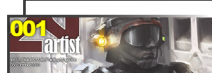
And if it is inspiration you are after this issue is perfect for you. This month's gallery is full of exceptional art by exceptional artists, including work from **Brad Rigney**, **Daarken**, **Andreas Rocha**, **Ignacio Bazan Lazcano** and **Sergey Musin**. I can almost hear your jaws drop to the floor!

As if that wasn't enough our making of this month is by surrealist genius **Yang Xueguo**, and he tells us how he created his great image Concrete 5 and gives us a master class in painting light! From the Surreal we jump to the stereoscopic, you all thought that 3D was limited to the world of 3D Modeling and sculpting, well this month we are proved wrong as we catch up with Theo Prins. Theo is an amazing digital painter who has mastered the art of stereoscopic painting.

James Wolf Strehle is this month's sketchbook artist. James has been in the 2DArtist gallery on many occasions, and this month we get to have a look at how he starts his digital painting process.

Ok, so on to the tutorials. For all of those who have been enjoying the Futuristic Marines series we have a slightly different twist on the subject this month. **Alex Ruiz** shows us that Futuristic marines don't have to be male to look tough, and shows us how he broke away from his usual process to create his great locker room scene.

On the subject of futuristic marines, the next instalment of the concept art for games series shows us how to design the main character of our game. **Bart Tiongson** is our instructor again this month, and gives us

another fantastic insight into working in the games industry, and shows us how to create fast and original concepts in Photoshop.

We stick with the same subject matter for this month's Custom Brushes for Sci-Fi tutorial. **Roberto. F. Castro** shows us ways to create brushes to help with our workflow and overall appearance of your work, and in this issue he concentrates on vents and wires, and shows a great way of creating volumetric light using a custom brush.

Moving away from Sci-Fi and on to Fantasy, this month's creature from folklore is a Fairy and showing us how to paint them is **Nykolai Aleksander**. Nykolai is full of tips and tricks, including a cool way to create a color palette. Fairy's are something that we are very familiar with, but Nykolai puts an interesting and modern twist on the subject. Well there is plenty in there to keep you going, have fun!

2d artist

Concept Art, Digital & Matte Painting Magazine
Issue 058 October 2010

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If you're having problems viewing the double-page spreads that we feature in this magazine, follow this handy little guide on how to set up your PDF reader!

Setting up your PDF reader

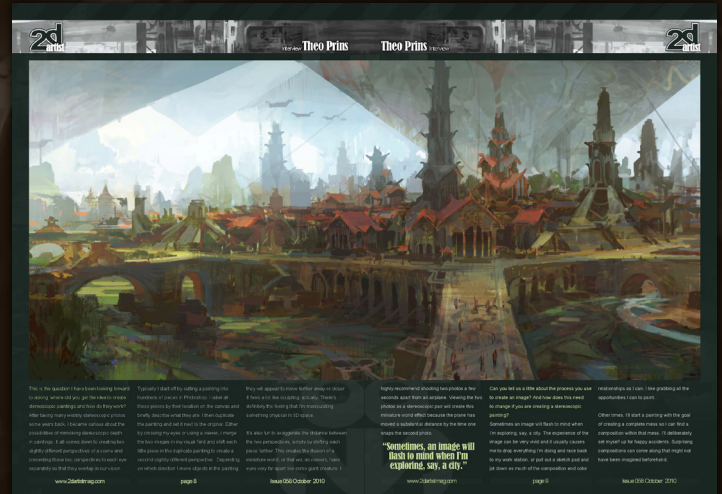For optimum viewing of the magazine it is recommended that you have the latest Acrobat Reader installed.

You can download it for free here: **DOWNLOAD!**

To view the many double-page spreads featured in 2DArtist magazine, you can set the reader to display 'two-up', which will show double-page spreads as one large landscape image:

1. Open the magazine in Reader;

2. Go to the View menu, then Page display;

3. Select Two-up Continuous, making sure that Show Cover Page is also selected.

Theo Prins

A young artist with a passion for environments, he works internationally as a freelance concept artist and travels frequently in search of inspiration for his own work. His latest projects include a growing collection of stereoscopic paintings and he's currently in the process of creating an illustrated book.

http://www.theoprins.com/

theo.w.prins@gmail.com

Contributing Artists

Every month many artists around the world contribute to **3DCreative** and **2DArtist** magazines. Here you can find out a bit more about them! If you would like to be a part of **3DCreative** or **2DArtist** magazine, please contact: simon@3dtotal.com

Roberto F. Castro

An architect and visual artist; he has won awards in architecture and design and is the author of several architectural projects. As a visual artist he uses both traditional and digital techniques alike, and he develops works incorporating digital painting, concept art and animation. A great part of his work is focused on architectural environments, futuristic design, and character/creature design.

http://robertofc.com/

contact@robertofc.com

Yang Xueguo

Yang Xueguo comes from Kunming, China. He started painting when he was a little boy and now is an art teacher at an art university. After graduating from university he decided to engage in 3D animation and digital painting. Yang prefers fantasy and surreal arts, and usually paints digitally, but plans to do some oil painting in the future.

http://seedsfromhell.blogspot.com

blur1977@126.com

Nykolai Aleksander

A UK-based freelance character illustrator and portrait painter, she's been working in the CG field for the past eight years, with publications in several Ballistic Publishing books and 3Dtotal's 'Digital Art Masters' series, as well as numerous magazines around the world.

http://www.admemento.com

x@admemento.com
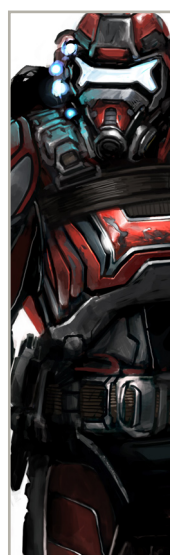
Bart Tiongson

Bart was born in the Philippines and raised in Toronto, Canada. Currently employed as a concept artist at Robot Entertainment, Bart was the lead artist on Halo Wars at Ensemble Studios and has over 10 years of industry experience. Bart loves to eat!

http://riceandeggs.blogspot.com/

BTiongson@RobotEntertainment.com

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INTERVIEW WITH
THEO PRINS

Theo Prins is a fascinating digital artist living in Washington USA. He's spent periods of his life in a variety of different and diverse locations around the world, which have clearly influenced his art, and he's also a pioneer of Stereoscopic painting. Sound interesting? Read on to find out more!

How to view the Stereoscopic paintings

While looking at the center of the stereoscopic pair, place your finger about halfway between you and the screen. If you converge your eyes to focus on your finger you will notice the images on the screen begin to overlap.

Adjust your finger's position until the images completely overlap. Because you are still focusing on your finger, the images on the screen will be blurred.

The trick is to remove your finger and allow yourself to focus on the screen without uncrossing your eyes. Done correctly, you will see three images on the screen. The center image will have depth and the two outer images will not.

Your brain translates the disparity between the images that have overlapped into the experience of depth.

"I spend a lot of time biking around with my laptop, sitting in different places and painting"

Interview with Theo Prins

Hi Theo, it's great to meet you and thanks for agreeing to be interviewed by *2DArtist*. We usually start with an obvious one to get the ball rolling. Can you tell us a little about yourself? How did you end up in the digital art industry?
For most of my life I've been creating imaginary environments with pen/pencil, paint, clay and sometimes cardboard. I've always been focused on places. Among other things, flight has always fascinated me. I used to draw lots of airplanes. In my early teens I decided to pursue a pilot license and earned money by drawing airplane portraits for pilots at the local airport. This ended abruptly when I was shown a graphics tablet in high school. From there on out I painted digitally and became quite inspired by the sci-fi realms of concept artists. I ended up creating a Deviantart profile and posted frequently on the Sijun forums. Through this I got my first job at CCP games in Iceland.

I can tell by some of your paintings that you must be well travelled. Which parts of the world would you say have influenced you the most and is there anywhere that you would like to go that you think will be inspirational?
I've lived in small, quiet places by the water for most of my life, in the US and in Holland. Despite this, or perhaps because of this, I wound up with a fascination for dirty sprawling cities. So over the past three years I've fed this habit in my art by traveling to those sorts of places. Several years ago I had the wonderful experience of living in Seoul, South Korea, working for Reloaded Studios. In early 2009 I spent three months in Vietnam and Thailand traveling with my laptop, sketching and working on my stereoscopic paintings. It's definitely the lively density and the visual chaos that I love about cities in Asia. Sadly, many of these places are being scraped away to make room for new apartment buildings. I'm on a mission to see the old world before it disappears.

This is the question I have been looking forward to asking: where did you get the idea to create stereoscopic paintings and how do they work? After taking many wobbly stereoscopic photos some years back, I became curious about the possibilities of mimicking stereoscopic depth in paintings. It all comes down to creating two slightly different perspectives of a scene and presenting these two perspectives to each eye separately so that they overlap in our vision.

Typically I start off by cutting a painting into hundreds of pieces in Photoshop. I label all these pieces by their location on the canvas and briefly describe what they are. I then duplicate the painting and set it next to the original. Either by crossing my eyes or using a viewer, I merge the two images in my visual field and shift each little piece in the duplicate painting to create a second slightly different perspective. Depending on which direction I move objects in the painting

they will appear to move farther away or closer. It feels a lot like sculpting, actually. There's definitely the feeling that I'm manipulating something physical in 3D space.

It's also fun to exaggerate the distance between the two perspectives, simply by shifting each piece farther. This creates the illusion of a miniature world, or that we, as viewers, have eyes very far apart like some giant creature. I

highly recommend shooting two photos a few seconds apart from an airplane. Viewing the two photos as a stereoscopic pair will create this miniature world effect because the plane has moved a substantial distance by the time one snaps the second photo.

"Sometimes, an image will flash to mind when I'm exploring, say, a city."

Can you tell us a little about the process you use to create an image? And how does this need to change if you are creating a stereoscopic painting?

Sometimes an image will flash to mind when I'm exploring, say, a city. The experience of the image can be very vivid and it usually causes me to drop everything I'm doing and race back to my work station, or pull out a sketch pad and jot down as much of the composition and color

relationships as I can. I like grabbing all the opportunities I can to paint.

Other times, I'll start a painting with the goal of creating a complete mess so I can find a composition within that mess. I'll deliberately set myself up for happy accidents. Surprising compositions can come along that might not have been imagined beforehand.

When I clean up a painting I define certain key shapes just enough for the mind to take off and fill in the rest. I think our brains are very powerful when it comes to filling in details that are only loosely suggested, or that the artist didn't even intend. This can be good or bad depending on the purpose of the image. There are of course times when I want to be more deliberate with what is communicated in the image, particularly with freelance work. However, in my own work I like the "it can be a dog or a car" approach.

"It's challenging to carry through the looseness of a 2D painting when it's converted to stereo."

My stereoscopic painting process has actually infiltrated my regular 2D process quite a bit. There can be emptiness in the 3D space if I convert just any 2D composition to stereo. More so than a 2D composition, I feel a stereoscopic composition requires each little object in the

painting to be more independent and interesting in itself. This is because each object can be viewed at its own depth plane, just as we view the real world. Objects in a 2D painting sometimes rely on being viewed flat and compressed with everything else in the painting to convey the fullness and complexity of the real world. Additionally, because I have stereoscopic depth at my disposal, I almost subconsciously place less importance on conventional depth cues like atmospheric perspective.

When combined with my tendency to make each object a potential point of focus, my stereoscopic paintings can appear a bit cluttered when viewed in 2D. All in all, it's challenging to carry through the looseness of a 2D painting when it's converted to stereo.

As a freelance concept artist you must have worked on various different projects. What would you say has been your favorite project to date? And are there any projects you would like to work on in the future?

I haven't really worked on a large variety of different commercial projects at this point, but within the projects that I have worked on there's been much variety. Currently I'm really enjoying the work I'm doing for Reloaded Studios. I've been with their project from an early stage so it's been a great experience to see the concepts evolve, plus the art direction gives me freedom as an artist. As for the future, I don't know what's out there and I'm open to surprises. In the realm of personal projects, I want to keep developing my stereoscopic paintings and see where they take me.

I have always thought that where you live and the environment that surrounds you will influence your art and that is certainly clear in your case. But beyond that, would you say that there is a specific artist or style of art that has influenced you?

When I first started working digitally I was

definitely influenced by the whole speed painting movement and Craig Mullins's work in particular. Then, for quite some time, I pulled myself away from the internet. I was spending too much time on the computer and it wasn't healthy.

"The physical reality of working behind a computer for hours on end results in a kind of sluggishness that really doesn't support the creative process."

Something that I have realized over a period of time is that a lot of artists we interview started down one career path and later turned their back on it to take up a career in digital art. Is there any advice that you would give to someone who was thinking of taking that step? And do you ever think about where you would be now if you had pursued a career as a pilot? The physical reality of working behind a computer for hours on end results in a kind of sluggishness that really doesn't support the creative process. As a balance, I'm finding it

helpful to continually work in different locations. I spend a lot of time biking around with my laptop, sitting in different places and painting. New ideas come along and I've become more flexible in the way that I work. And after years of working purely digitally, I'm also working with pen and pencil again. This has been very refreshing.

I don't often think of where I'd be if I had become a commercial pilot. The idea seems quite alien to me now. The idea became alien to

me back then, and that's what made it okay to quit. Although I do think that occasionally flying for pleasure would still be very fun.

I understand there is an exhibition in America that displays a lot of your stereoscopic paintings. How did that come about? Do you think that having a traditional exhibition of digital art improves people's general impression of the subject and raises its profile?
Yes, the exhibitions in the 3D Center of Art and Photography in Portland, Oregon, USA. It's a cozy museum and gallery showcasing antique and contemporary stereoscopic imagery. I made good friends with someone in South Korea who was coincidentally very much into everything stereoscopic. He pointed me towards the 3D Center as an outlet for stereoscopic art.

I've had a few digital art shows over the years and people have been very supportive and curious about the medium. So, from my experience, I'd say having a traditional show has improved at least someone's impression. Digital art is just new, and people I've spoken to often times don't know it's possible to "draw" and "paint" on the computer.

One thing that I really enjoy when I am looking through your portfolio is your ability to come up with unique ideas. Your overall style of painting is really quite different and recognizable and the stereoscopic paintings are obviously unique. How important do you think it is to stand out and be able to come up with original ideas and styles?
In my personal work, I don't place so much value on uniqueness by itself. I think purposefully trying to be unique can get in the way of the creative process. To me, it implies that one would be spending time carefully avoiding a whole array of already existing styles and ideas just to find that elusive original one. If uniqueness is to be the result of any kind of artistic process it's probably by surprise and without much deliberation.
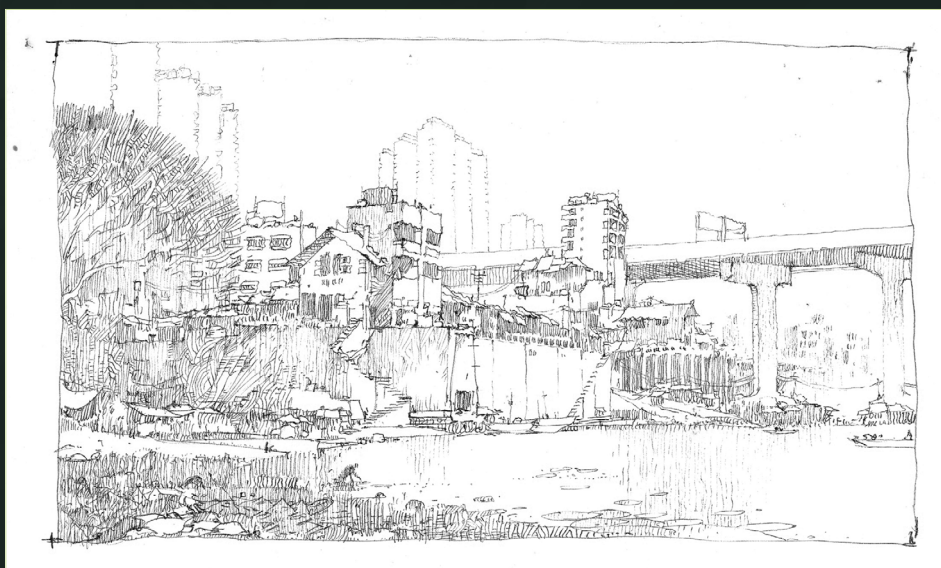
I'm drawing what inspires me by following mysterious compulsions to draw certain things in a certain way. I'm not too controlling and the results are often surprising. I don't let any pre-conceived visions I might have of a painting limit the end result. Occasionally something unique might result, but it's not my goal.

I often find that although artists can be very quiet and humble about their ambitions, they are, in general, very ambitious. You seem to have achieved a lot in a short space of time, so what would you say is your greatest achievement to date and do you have any goals artistic or otherwise?
I'm very happy to have kept drawing and painting since childhood. There were numerous times when I could have let go of this habit. When I first moved back to the US from the Netherlands at age 13, it took me several years to get back into drawing. I became very passionate about flying and I was slowly forgetting about my art. Eventually I came around to digital art and that's what really brought back my creative drive.

As for my goals, an illustrated book and an animation have been brewing in my head for years. Every now and then I have intense two week sessions where lots of pieces slide into place. This has been happening more frequently as of late. Developing this project is becoming my goal.

Thanks for agreeing to be interviewed by *2DArtist*. You really are a fascinating artist and the team and I have really enjoyed looking at your stereoscopic paintings. I hope to see a lot more from you in the future.

You're welcome. I've known about 3DTotal for a long time, so I'm happy to have taken part. Thank you!

Theo Prins

For more information please visit:

http://www.theoprins.com/

Or contact them at:

theo.w.prins@gmail.com

Interviewed by: Simon Morse

SKETCHBOOK
OF JAMES WOLF STREHLE

James shares a selection of his sketches and started pieces with us in this month's sketchbook. James is a great believer in getting straight in to Photoshop and putting some color down, and we can see in his images how he can turn a dash of color here and there into a great finished image.
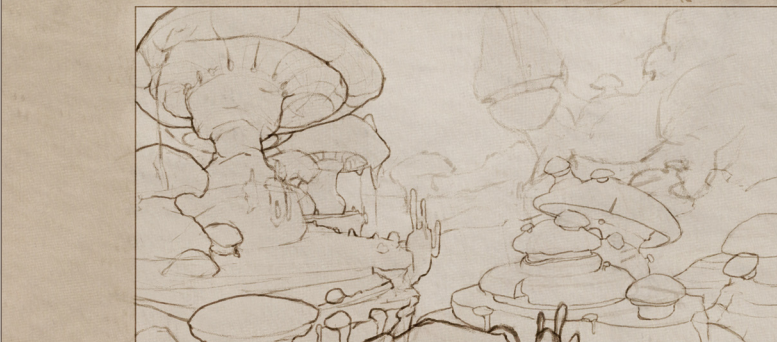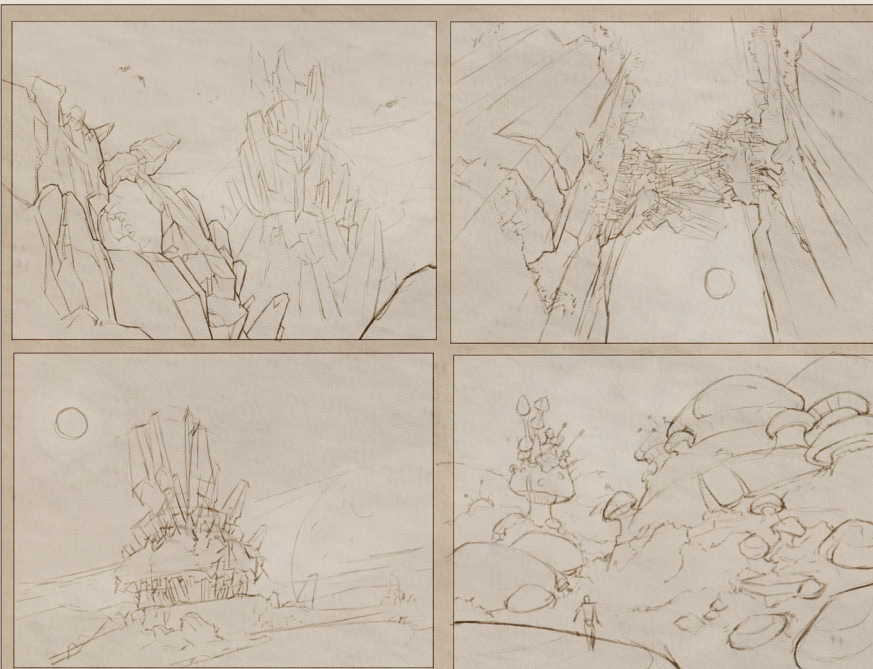
SKETCHBOOK OF JAMES WOLF STREHLE

As a digital artist I don't think I really have what you would consider a conventional "sketchbook". It is a cluttered pile of folders and files, but the heart of this digital mess contains much of what the artist is about. When you do open it up you are opening a folder of a thousand unfinished fantasies. It is a world of undiscovered lands and characters searching for a purpose. I have so many unfinished works that it was hard to make a selection for this article, but I've managed to scrounge up a few to write some words about.

When it comes to sketching environments I usually don't get much further than a few scribbled lines before filling the screen with color. The reason is that environments have a lot more freedom than figurative work, because you don't have to be completely accurate to be believable, so I let the textures and brush work fill in the details for me (**Fig.01**).

I usually reserve slightly more involved environment sketches for clients, because there tend to be more restrictions involved and there is no point in wasting time adding color in until you know you are on the right track (**Fig.02**).

With figurative work I tend to spend more time with the character's anatomy. I don't spend too much time perfecting it, but I try getting the anatomy close enough that I can use it as a guide, because I can always tweak and adjust during the painting stages.

Towards the end of the sketching process I fill in the major shapes to aid in the painting later, because I can quickly select the masks under the Channels tab later. This allows me to make large color washes and brush strokes without having to be precise, at least until a later point in the painting (**Fig.03 – 04**).
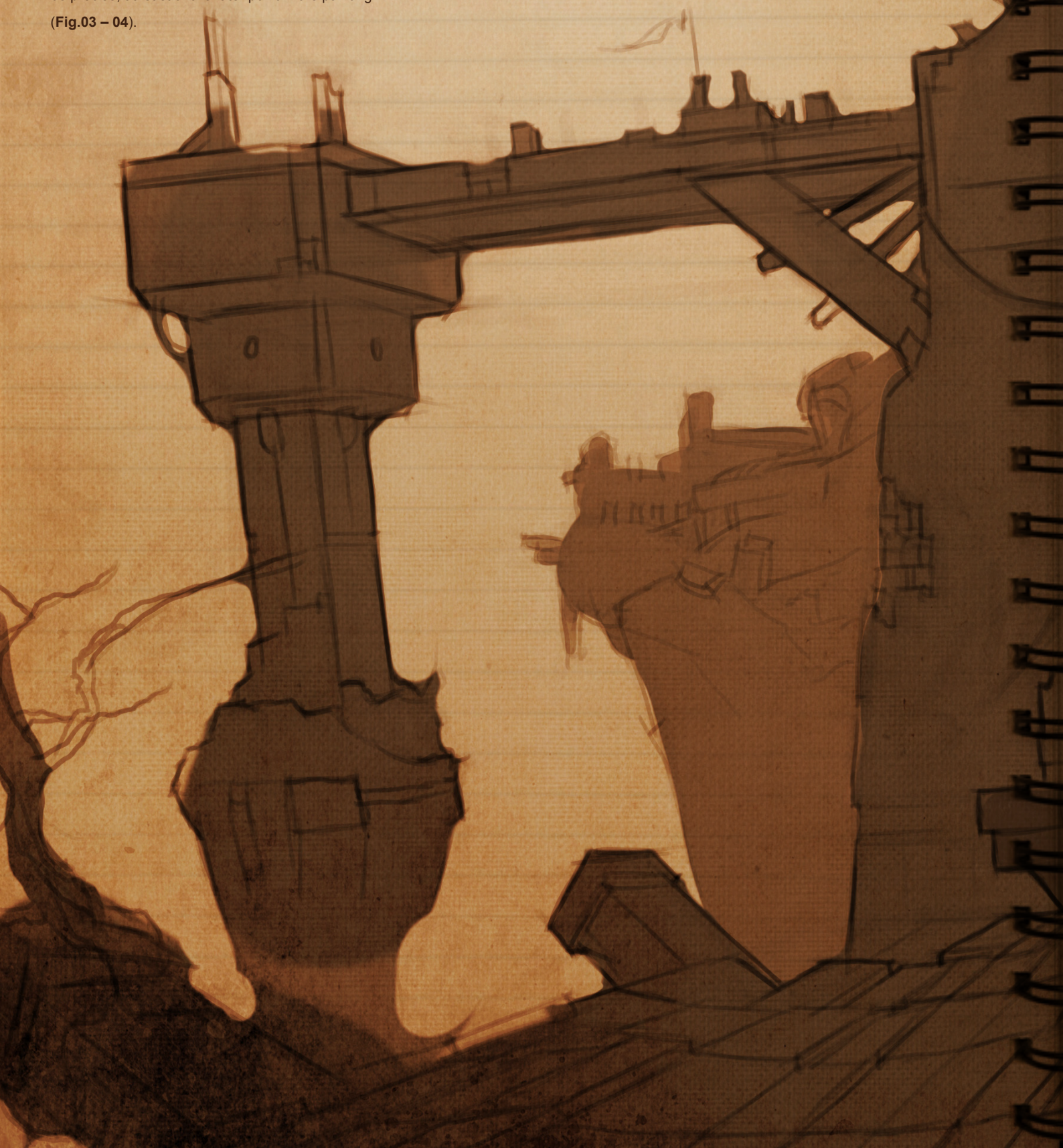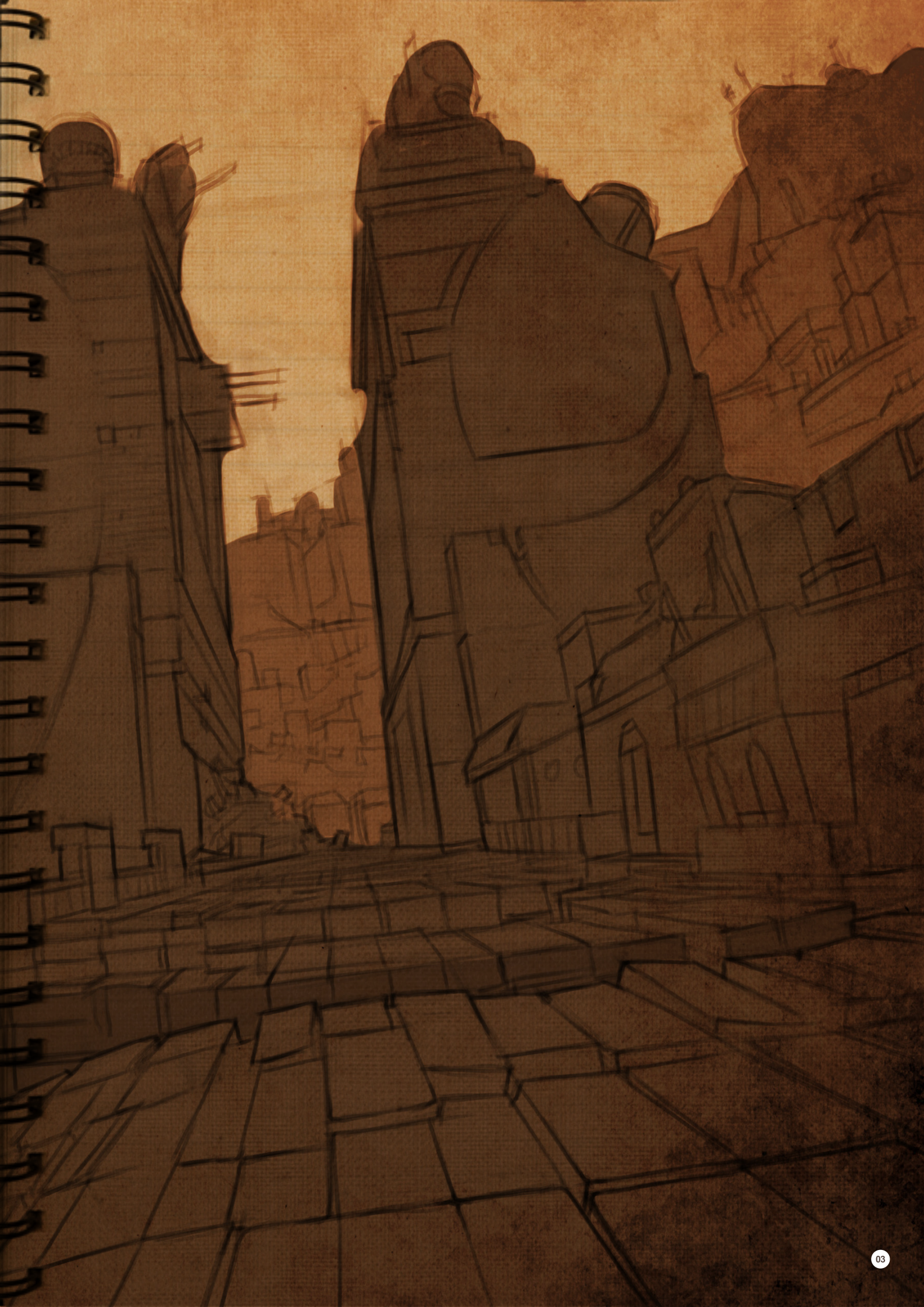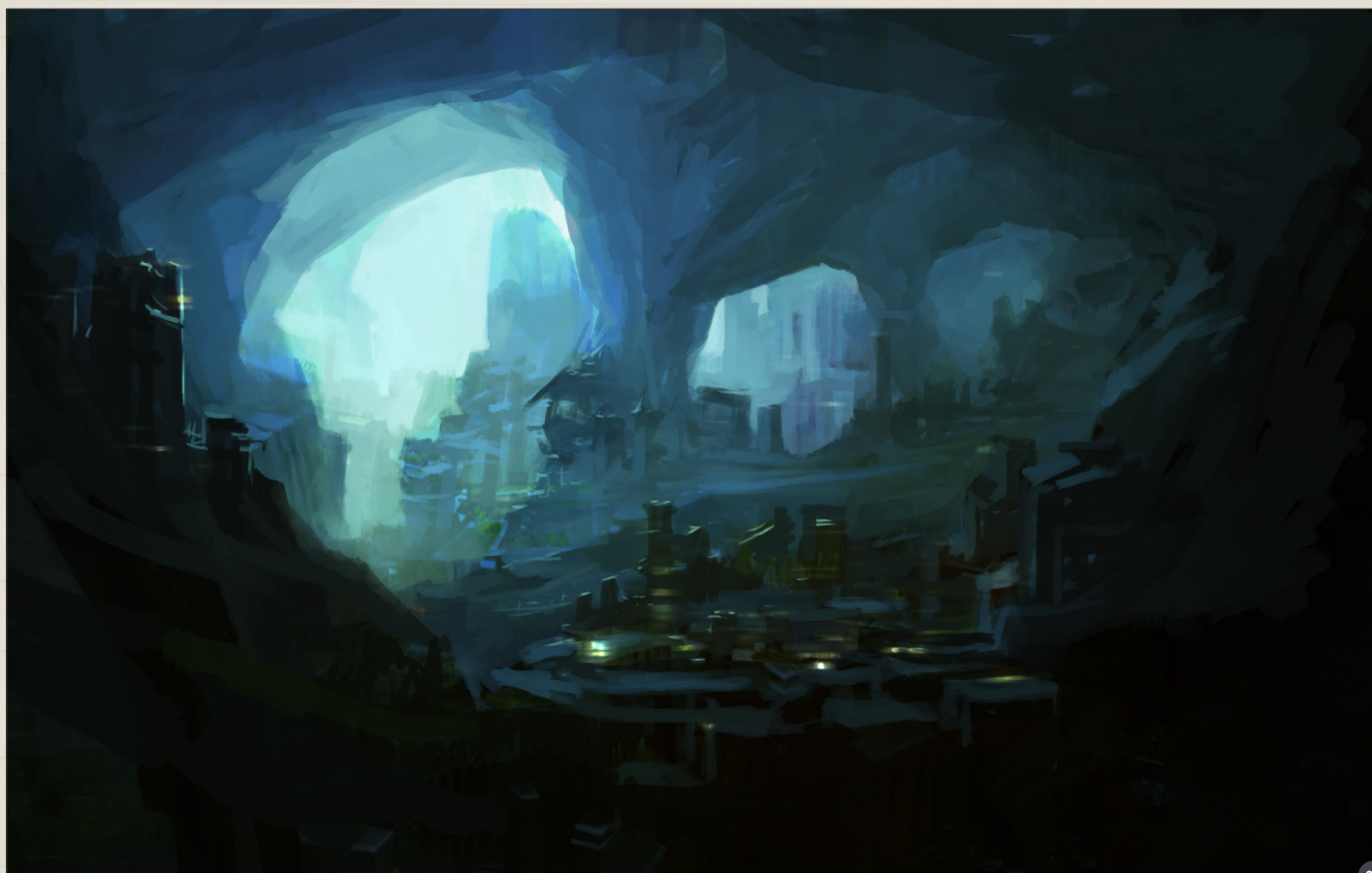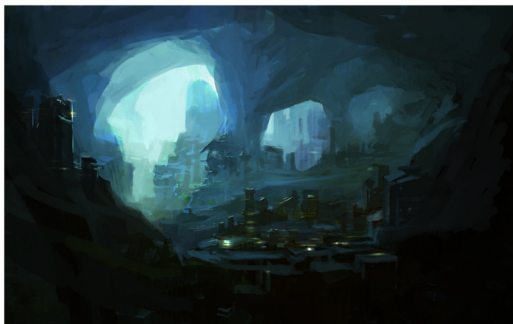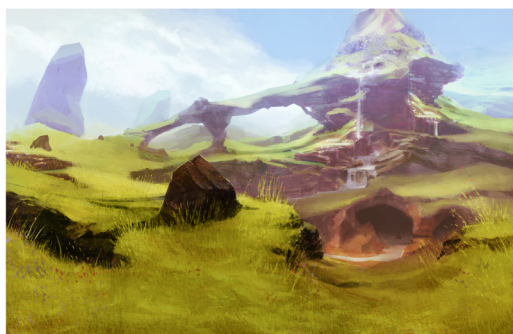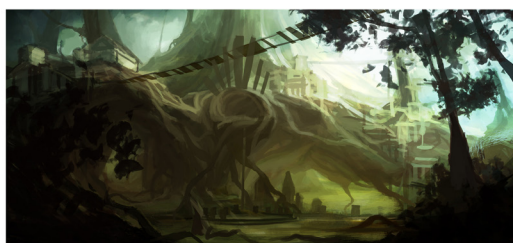
Lately I've been jumping right into the landscapes with full color because I find the process of experimentation to be very exciting. The time involved is still low and it allows me to get a more finished look. I also like getting the color in early in case I run out of time and the sketch ends up getting lost in my pile of unfinished work. I can open it up and immediately know what I was going for when I originally started the image (**Fig.05 – 06**).
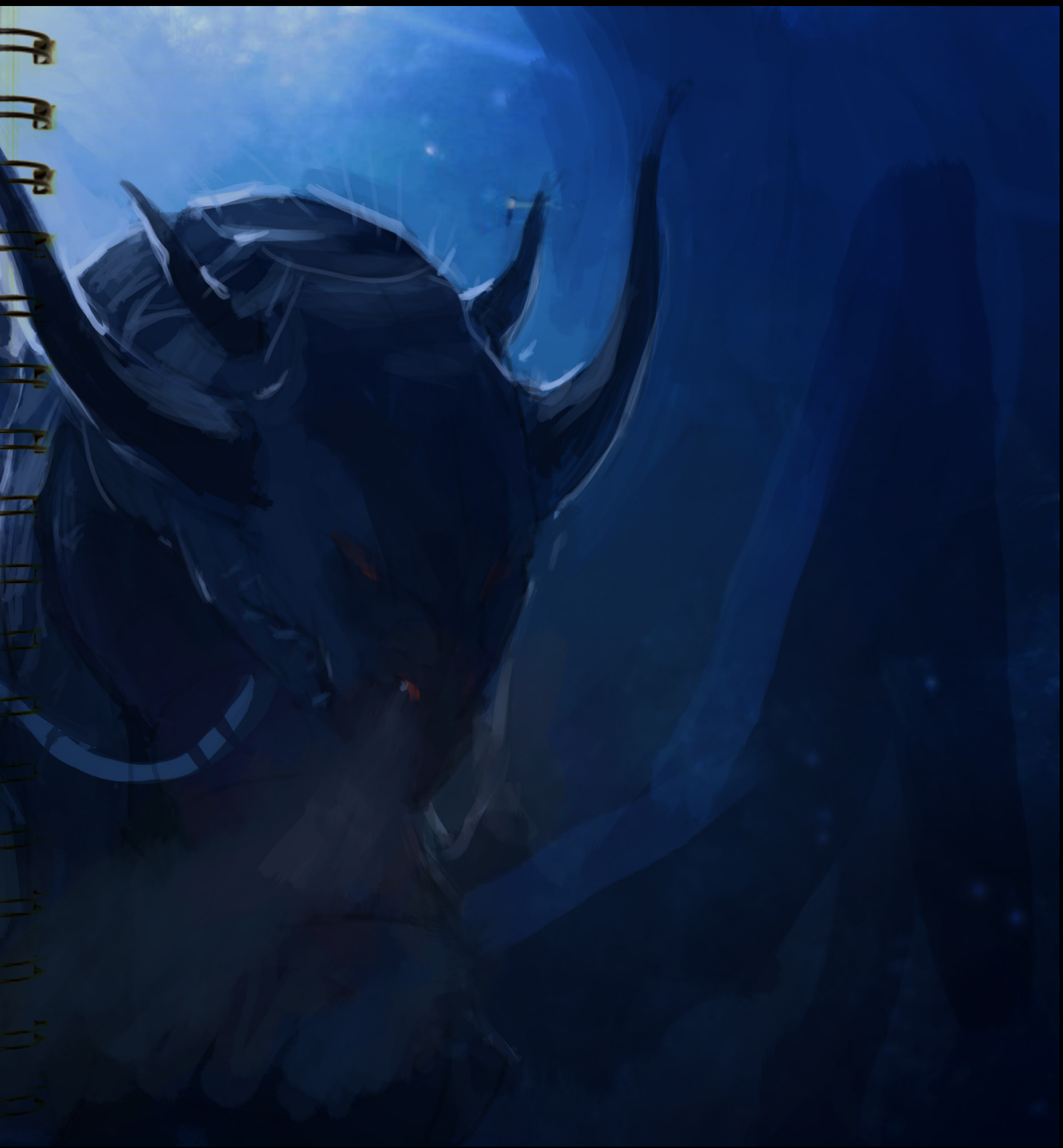
I have also been doing this with smaller illustrative work, because I've been trying to loosen up my style and not be so nitpicky about the small stuff. It lets me keep the image fresh and I don't get caught up in following the sketched guidelines (**Fig.07 – 08**).

This is a small selection of my "sketchbook" but hopefully I was able to give you an idea of what goes on behind the scenes that are normally kept in the shadows (**Fig.09 – 10**). If you would like to see the finished versions of many of these sketches, feel free to check out my art blog at: Jameswolfart.blogspot.com. Thanks for looking!
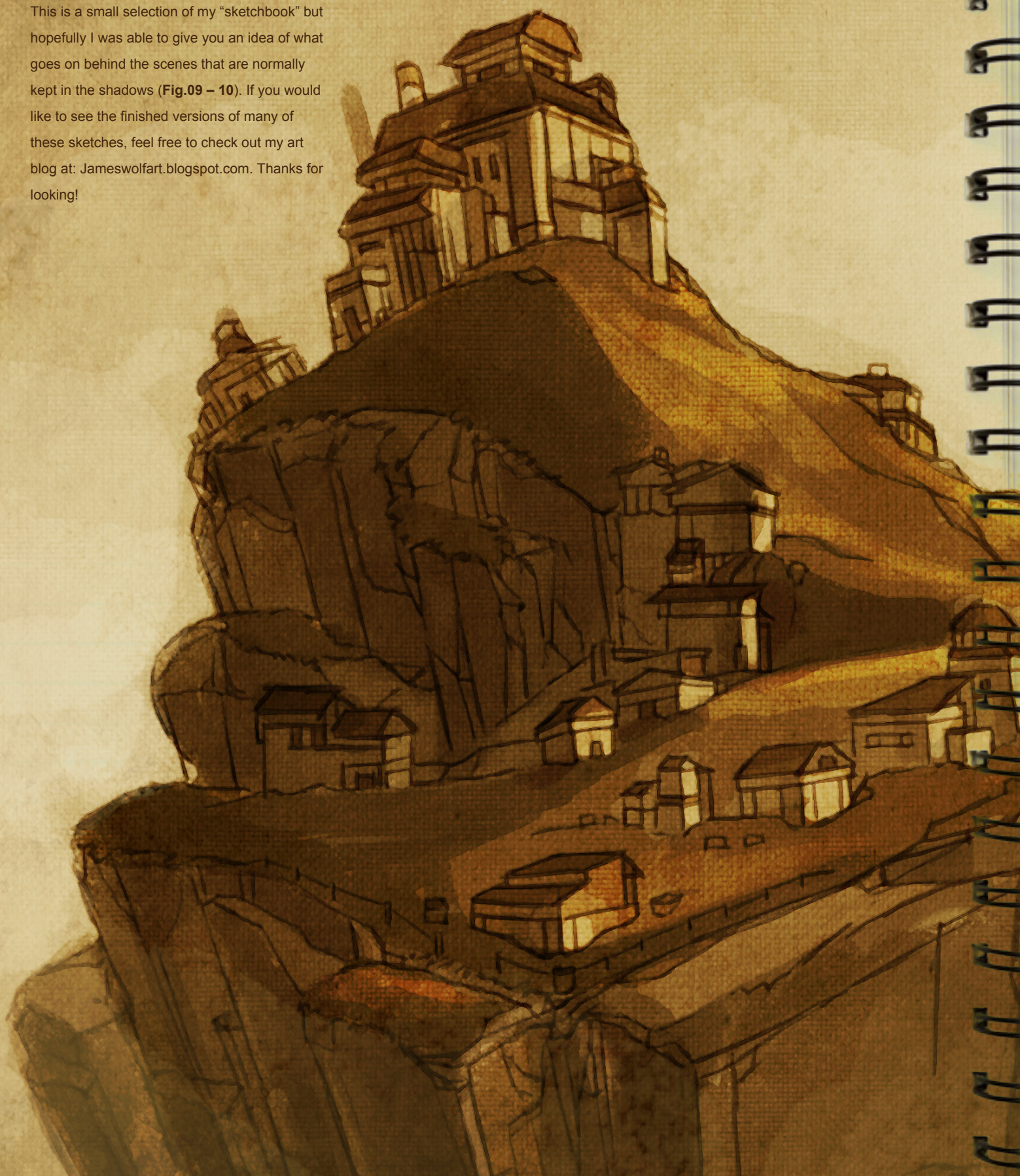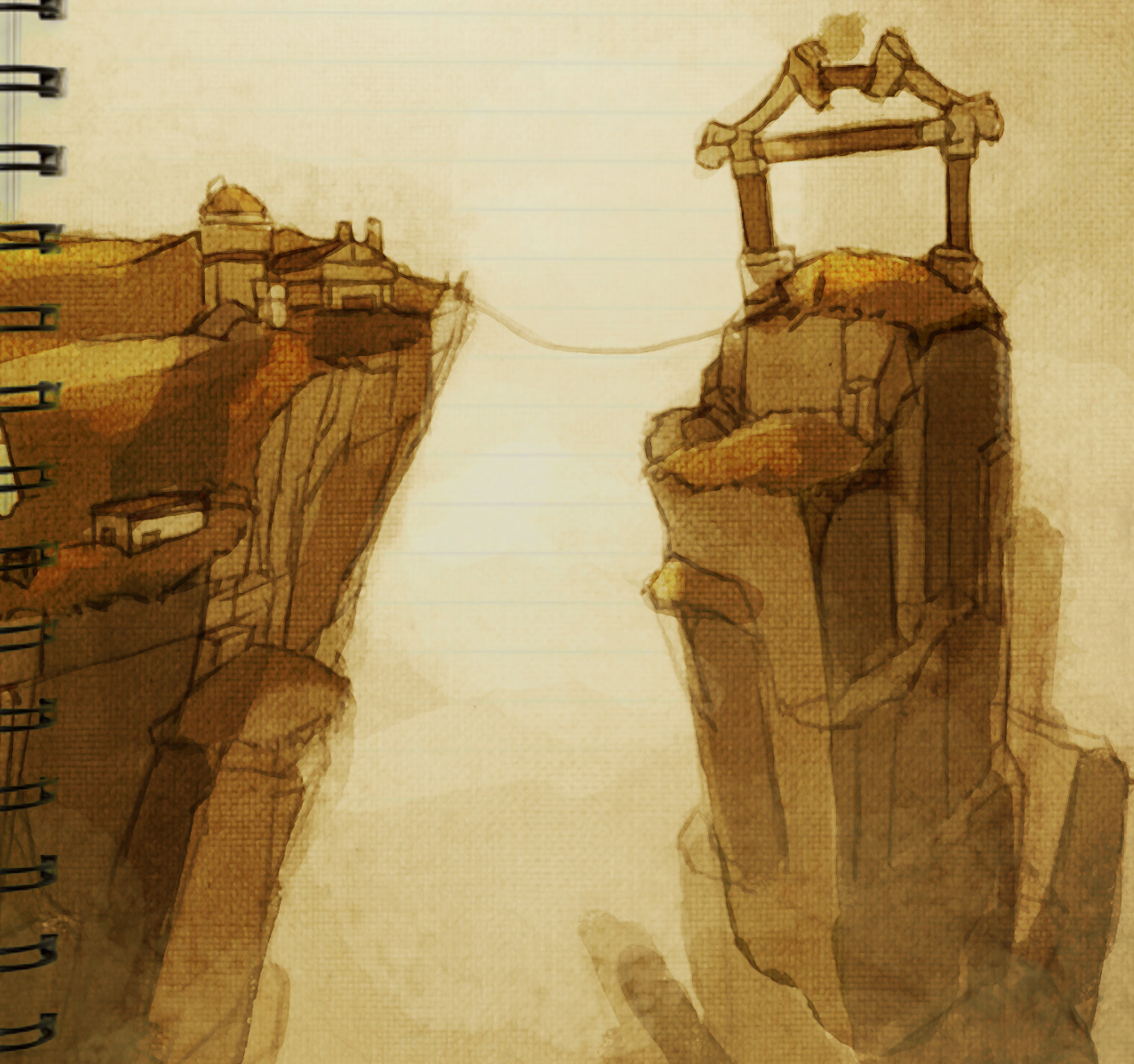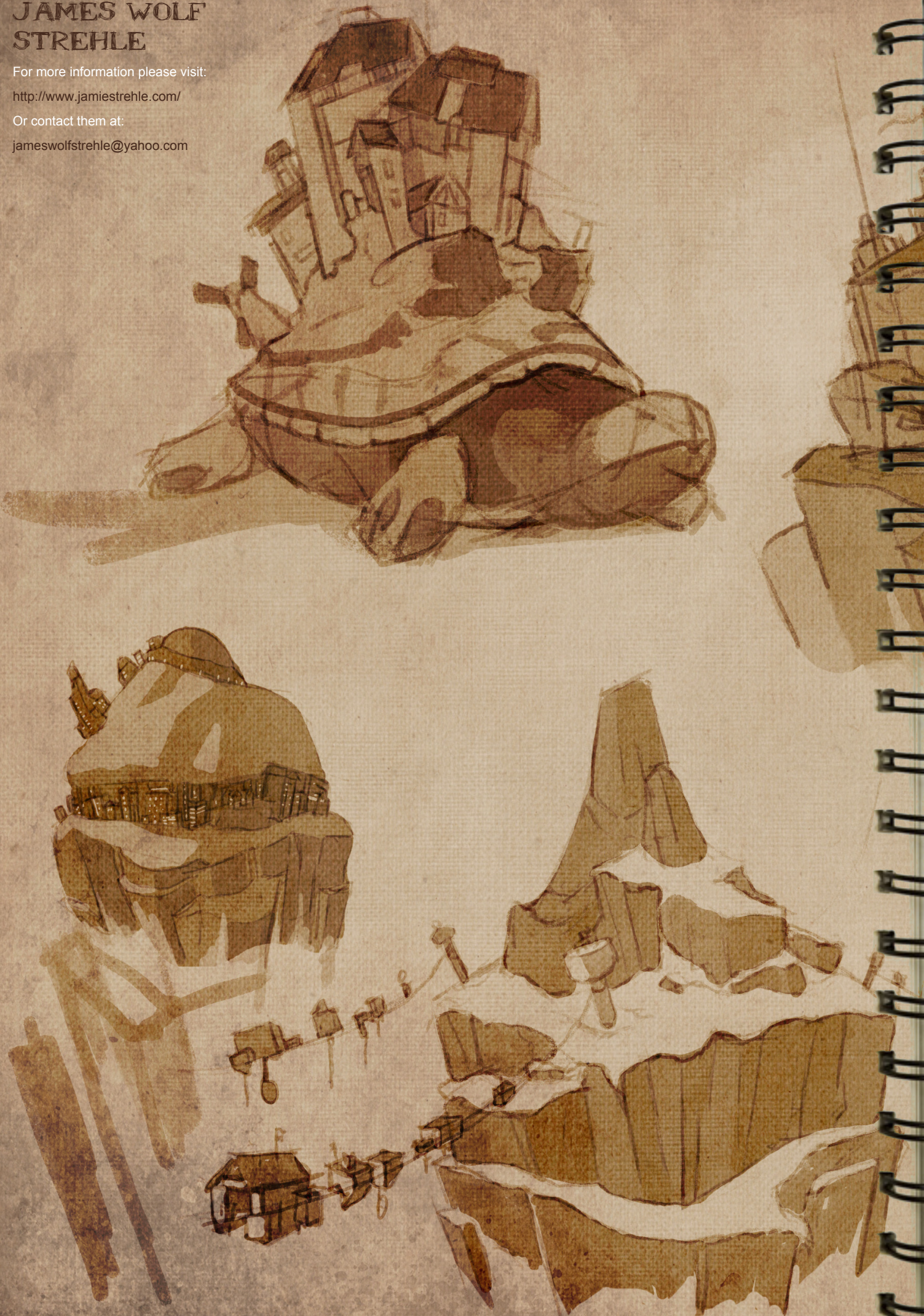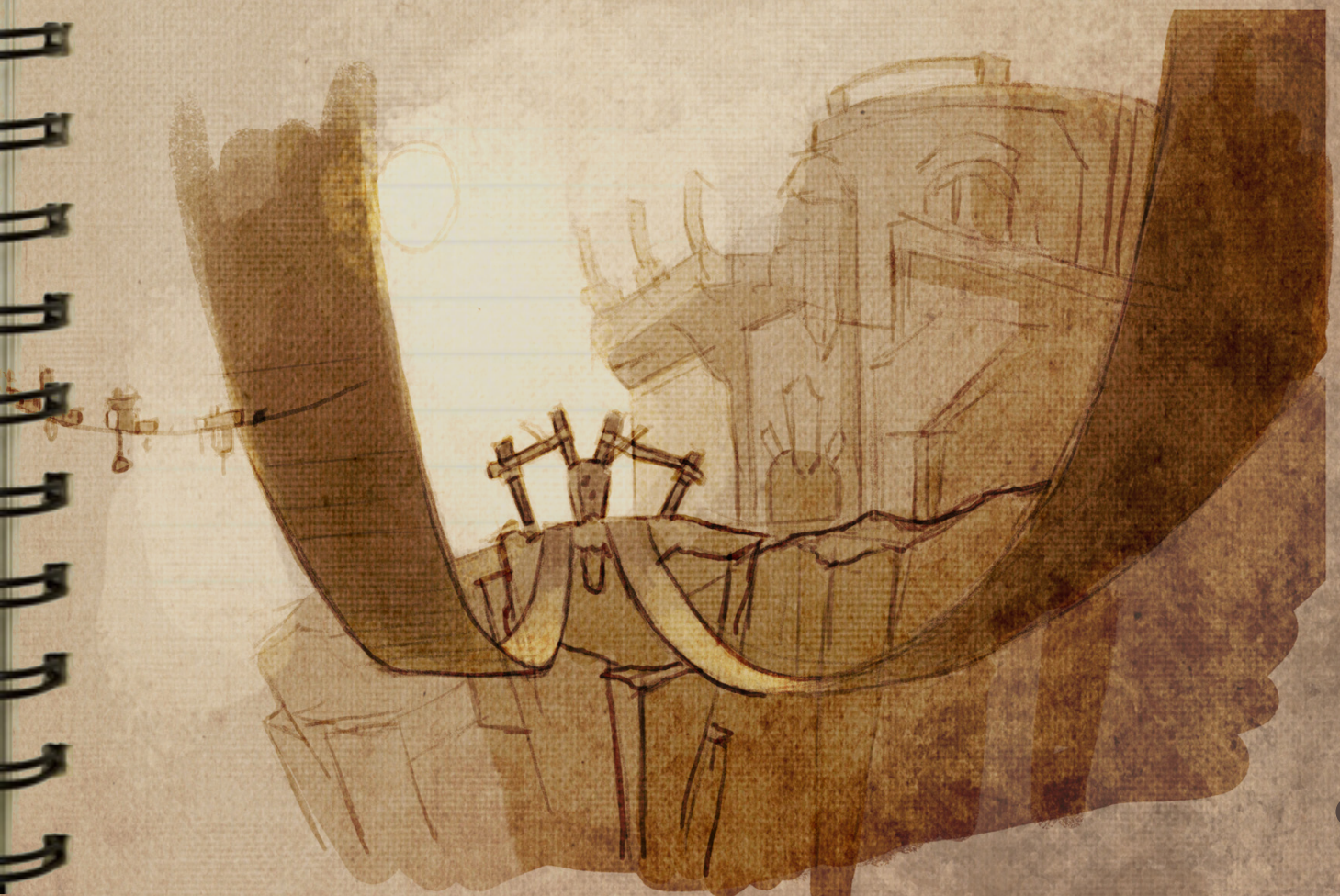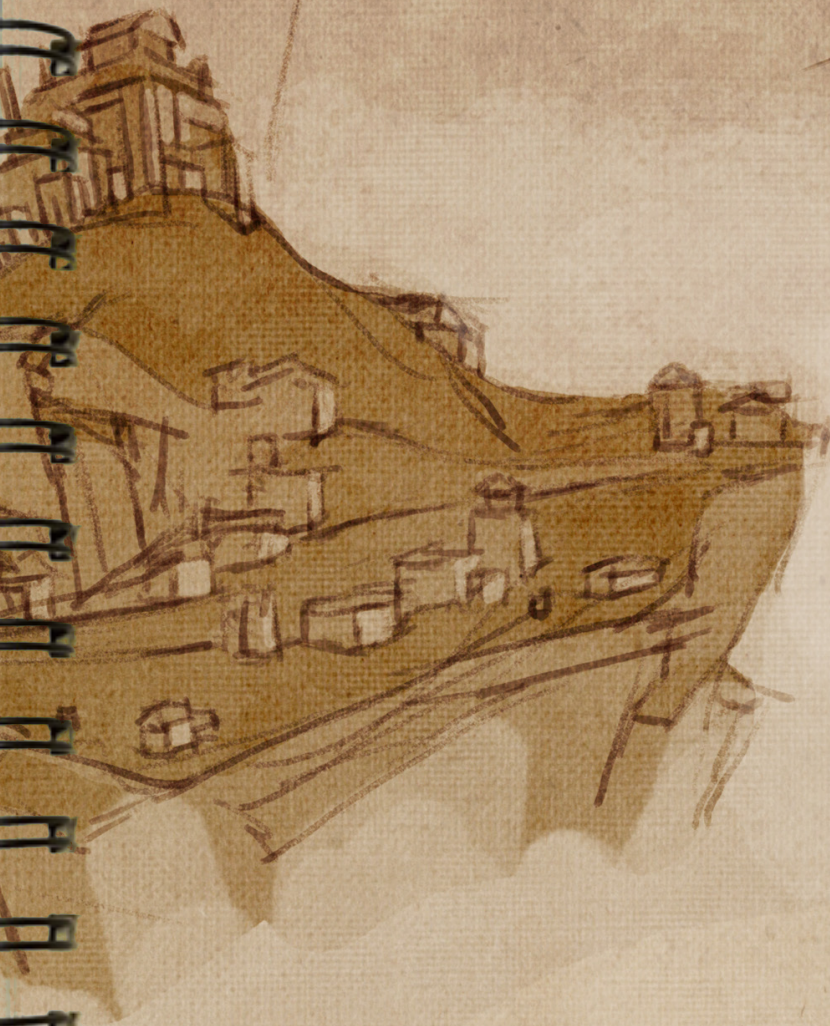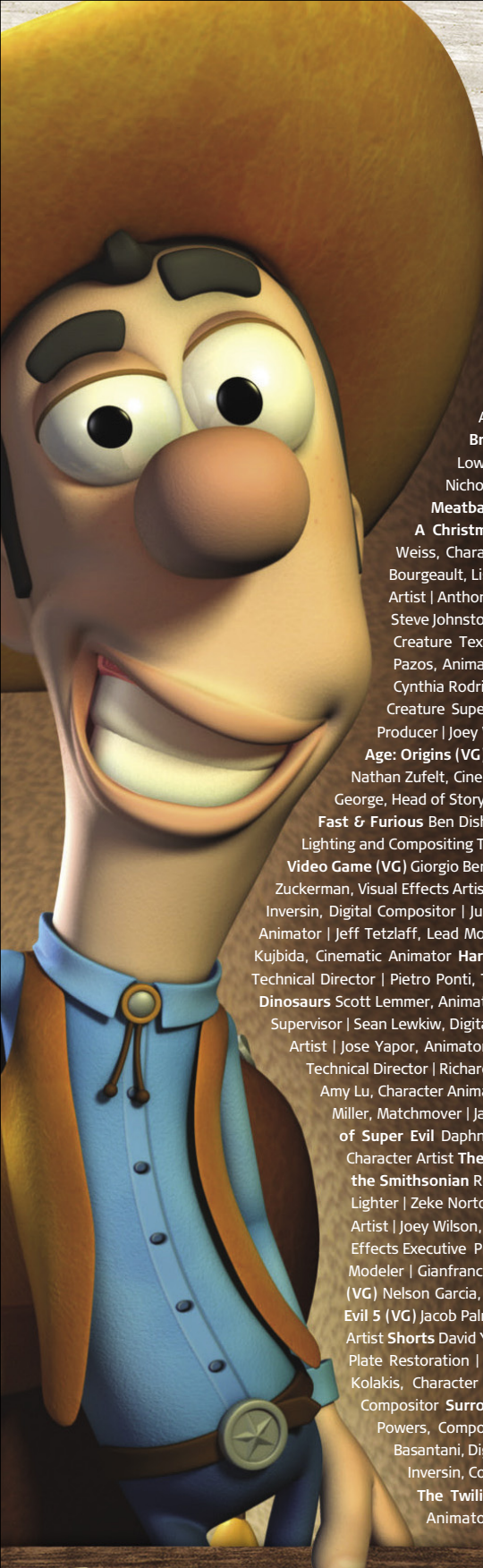
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McLeod, Digital Compositor **Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince** Harry Mukhopadhyay, Lead Effects Technical Director | Pietro Ponti, TD Generalist | Gia Sadhwani, Digital Effects Artist | Kieran Tether, Digital Artist | Teh-wei Yeh, Lighting TD **Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs** Scott Lemmer, Animator | Thom Roberts, Animator | Brent Wong, Modeler **Invictus** Christopher Ahrens, Lighting Lead | Geoffrey Hancock, Visual Effects Supervisor | Sean Lewkiw, Digital Effects Supervisor | Jason McKeeman, Lead Technical Animator | Farhad Mohasseb, Compositor | Michelle Skrzyniarz, Matchmove Artist | Jose Yapor, Animator **Killzone 2 (VG)** Andrea Arghinenti, Technical Artist **King of the Hill** Michael Loya, Director **Knowing** Tim Rowlandson, Rigging Technical Director | Richard Sur, Lighting Technical Director **Land of the Lost** Nicholas Augello, Massive Technical Director | Tony Etienne, Lighting Supervisor | Amy Lu, Character Animator **Law Abiding Citizen** Freddy Chavez, Compositor | Veronica Marino, Compositor | James McPhail, Effects Animator | Jacob Curtis Miller, Matchmover | Jay Randall, Visual Effects Supervisor | Derek Stevenson, Matchmover | Shawn Walsh, Visual Effects Executive Producer **The League of Super Evil** Daphne De Jesus, Compositor | Barry Karnowski, Animation Supervisor **The Lord of the Rings: Conquest (VG)** Michelle Lam, Lead Character Artist **The Lovely Bones** Michael Cozens, Lead Animator **Monsters vs. Aliens** Jiyoung Lee, Texture Artist **Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian** Rex Ahn, Previsualization Lead | Nicholas Augello, Technical Animator | Christopher Downs, Technical Animator | Joshua Herrig, Lead Lighter | Zeke Norton, Previsualization Supervisor | Ai Saimoto, Lighting Lead | Ben Sanders, Supervising Animator | Derek Stevenson, Previsualization Artist | Joey Wilson, Previsualization Artist | Adam Yaniv, Animation Supervisor **Orphan** Francisco Moncayo Moreno, Digital Artist | Shawn Walsh, Visual Effects Executive Producer **Paul Blart: Mall Cop** Riley Benard, Digital Compositor **Planet 51** Sandro di Segni, Senior Effects TD | Jorge Kirschner Torres, Modeler | Gianfranco Valle, Effects Animator **Prototype (VG)** Harry Ahn, Lead Cinematics Animator | Bobby Bath, Lead Character Artist **Punch-Out!! 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Visual Effects Artist **Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War II (VG)** Ian Cumming, Senior Artist | Allan Dilks, Artist | Nathan Hocken, Lead Animator | Christine Hubbard, Artist | Claire Roberts, Artist | Jefferson Takahashi, Artist **Watchmen** Ori Ben-Shabat, Compositor | Jelmer Boskma, Previs Modeler | Freddy Chavez, Compositor | Dominic Cheung, 3D Artist | Ben Dishart, Texture Artist | Ty Duperron, Modeler | Pearl Hsu, 3D Artist | Bernhard Kimbacher, Digital Artist | Sean Lewkiw, Technical Head of 3D | Matthias Lowry, Digital Compositor | James McPhail, Digital Effects Artist | Jacob Curtis Miller, Digital Artist | Lon Molnar, Visual Effects Supervisor | Harry Mukhopadhyay, Lead Effects TD | Cynthia Rodriguez del Castillo, Digital Artist | Derek Stevenson, Matchmove Artist | Shawn Walsh, Visual Effects Supervisor | Samson Wong, Compositor **Wheelman (VG)** Laura Gorrie, Senior Animator **Whiteout** Armando Velazquez, Digital Compositor | Clement Yip, Animator **Wolfenstein (VG)** Jason Martin, Modeler **X-Men Origins: Wolverine** Geeta Basantani, Digital Matte Painter | Rommel Shamoun, Compositor | Jeremy Stewart, Previs Artist **Zombieland** Mike Rhone, Visual Effects Artist

VFS student work by Thiago Martins

THE GALLERY

This month we feature:

Ivan Kash

Ignacio Bazan Lazcano

Andreas Rocha

Boco

Sergey Musin

Jxing

Aziz Maaqoul

Seyyed Ghassem

Bradford Rigney

Daarken

The Claws of Space

Aziz Maaqoul

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(Above)

Fields of Gold

Andreas Rocha

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(Below)

A Hostile Takeover

Bradford Rigney

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(Above)

The Day

Ignacio Bazan Lazcano

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(Below)

Horned Dragon

Ghassem Farhany

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Scene `3`

Ivan Kashubo

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Persian Sky Palace

Boco

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(Right)

Postapocalyptic Warior

Sergey Musin

http://www.samfx.com

samfxi@gmail.com

(Left)

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A Deadly Encounter

Daarken

http://daarken.com/

daarkenart@daarken.com

Me, a Drawing Robot

Jxing

angusyap@hotmail.com

CONCEPT ART
FOR GAMES

Concept art for computer games is a fascinating field and an industry that a lot of aspiring digital artists would love to be involved with. This tutorial series has been written by some of the biggest and best names in the gaming industry, who will guide us through the way they would tackle the three main areas where concept work is required: environments, characters and accessories. The artists involved in this series have created a games brief themselves and are free to create their own vision of the description. They will reflect on the steps they choose to take from the point of receiving the brief up until they have created a completed concept for their required section.

Chapter 4: Characters | Bart Tiongson

Game type: First person shooter
Genre: Sci-Fi **Year:** 2300

The setting is Earth and the prison planet, Asturia. 90% of the game is on Asturia.

Plot summary: Lex Crane, a former police officer, is now the chief of security at Skye Global, the largest manufacturer of pharmaceuticals on the planet. Lex discovers something about the company he works for that he shouldn't have, and this starts a chain reaction that causes him to be wrongly accused for the murder of his family and a local politician. He is sentenced to life imprisonment on the prison planet of Asturia. On the prison planet he is constantly targeted by the criminals that he put there all those years ago, along with an unknown enemy within the prison walls hired by Skye Global. Lex was framed by Skye Global's CEO, Lance Shepherd, and Shepherd is now trying to have him killed in a place where nobody will miss him or even realize he's dead. Lex is trying to escape from the prison and return to Earth, where he's convinced he can find the evidence to clear his name. Along the way he forms unexpected alliances and is disappointed by shocking betrayals.

The environment: The setting is dark and cold. The planet is basically a giant rock. There is no lush foliage or vast bodies of water. Instead there are pits of oil and sludge. The terrain has large, jagged rock formations jutting out sporadically throughout the landscape. The sky is constantly filled with flashes of green lightning, which brings on poisonous rain storms.

There is a giant prison facility that has been placed on the planet to house the galaxy's most violent and evil criminal element. Escape is rarely ever attempted because of the sheer fact that outside the walls survival is not possible. The extremely harsh climate, along with the predatory dangers that exist on the planet, make it so that the prisoners would rather stay confined to prison. At least there is food, shelter, warmth etc., inside the jail.

Prisoners are forced to work as part of their sentence. The labor camps are set up throughout the perimeter surrounding the prison. They are forced to mine for the oil that exists deep within the surface of the planet. Along with these intensely laborious tasks of digging and mining, the prisoners are also constantly expanding the facility to house yet more prisoners.

Concept Art for Games: Part 4 - Characters

Software used: Photoshop

There are various ways that I create characters. It all depends on the subject matter, the specifics of the character or even just the mood that I'm in at a certain time. But whether I'm using markers or graphite on paper or working digitally with Photoshop, one thing remains constant; I always do rough thumbnails to start off. It's important to keep things loose and gestural in the initial sketches. Here I use different ways to create thumbnails (**Fig.01**).

Sometimes I'll just "ink out" black solid shapes, while other times I'll use a very light gray as an "under layer" and ink out the linear details. On another occasion I might start off smudgy and just roughly fill in the areas of the silhouette until I feel that I've nailed a decent initial design.

In this image I've narrowed down several of the thumbnails that I feel are not only a cool designs but also suit the personality of the character (**Fig.02**). I want to keep each of these "finalists" as different from each other as possible; this way it makes it easier for me to choose one specific design to go with.

I end up using elements from each design to come up with the final choice (**Fig.03**). I like different things about each and the end result merges them all in some way. I start thinking more specifically about the face and hair specifics. Lex Crane (Lexus is his full name and he has always hated the fact that his father named him after a car. His father's name was Cadillac Crane) is a man in his mid 40's and is very strong willed and stubborn. He is a haggard and cold, and while good hearted at his core, he has an exterior that would lead people to believe otherwise. Keeping this information in mind is very important. You can never lose sight of the personality of the character. I always try to imagine how the character would behave in

01

02

03
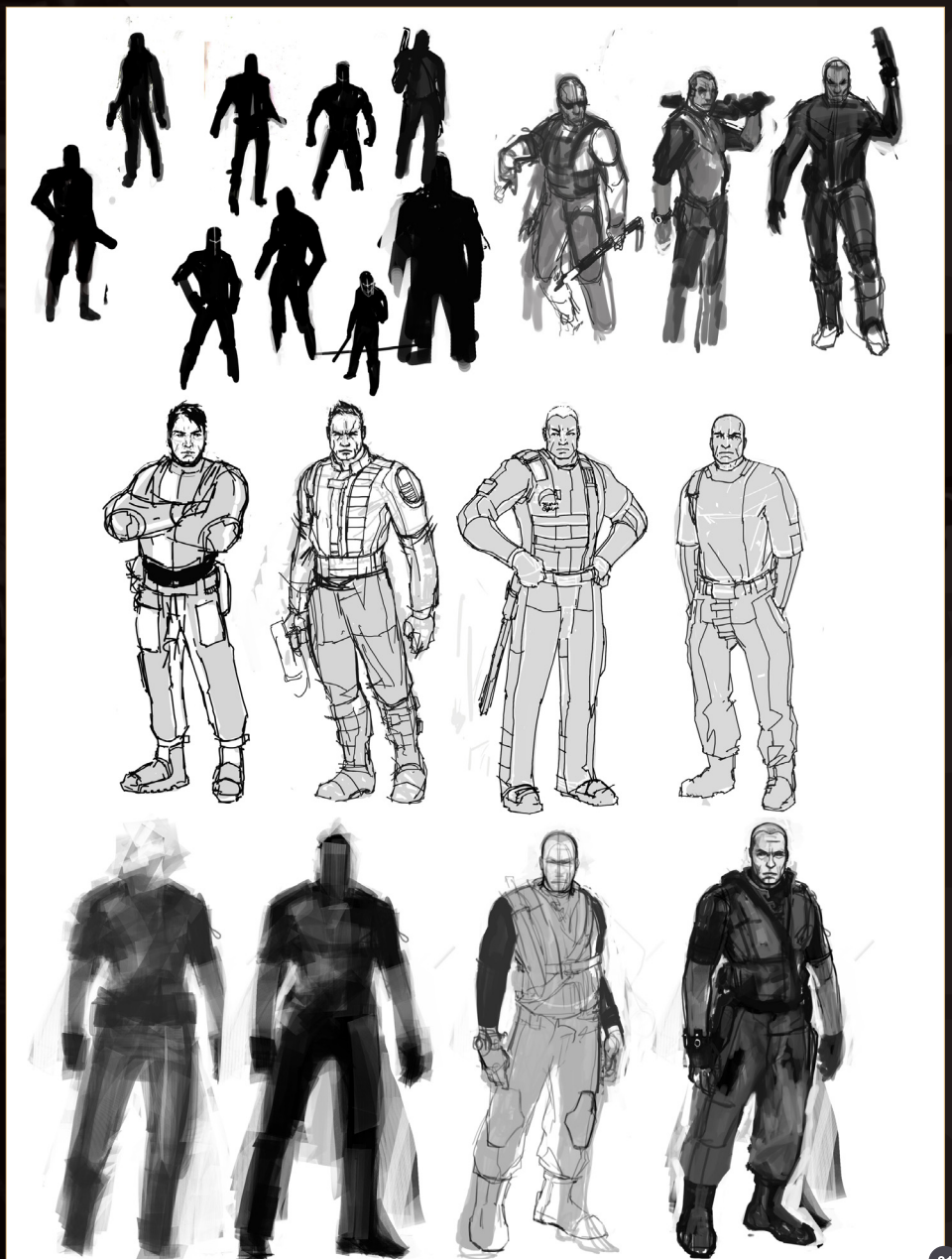
certain situations. This helps me to visualize the different physical aspects of the person I'm designing.

With this in mind I commit to a specific face and decide to run with it (**Fig.04**). I can very easily spend too much time on any given design, whether it's the face, the costume, a weapon etc. That is why it's important to do various thumbnails then choose one and confidently move forward. Once you've decided which designs to go with you do your best to make it as polished and cool as possible. Whilst I work out the details of his uniform as Chief of Security at Skye Global, I am also thinking about and polishing the specifics on his face. I go back and forth between the two concepts to help keep my mind fresh as well as allowing one design to affect the other.

In these four images you can see the progression from a loose thumbnail to the final concept (**Fig.05a**). I use pretty dramatic lighting to accentuate his bone structure. Lex is a very strong individual, both in mind and body, and I feel that this has to be reflected not only in

his body, but also his face. I draw very light construction lines to begin drawing the face. I break up the face into thirds keeping the eyes roughly in the center.

When I first begin a front view of a face, I will rough out the area of the eyes, ears, nose and mouth (**Fig.05b**). I'll then get a little tighter on the details on one side, then copy and flip the drawing to mirror the other side. This is for

placement and proportion only. Nobody's face is exactly identical on both sides, so it's important to paint in the "imperfections" of one's face to make it feel more realistic and believable. This is also how you show the character in one's face.

After I've basically solidified the front view, I'll use the same steps to create the sides and the ¾ front view as well (**Fig.06**). Unless there is something very unique and specific
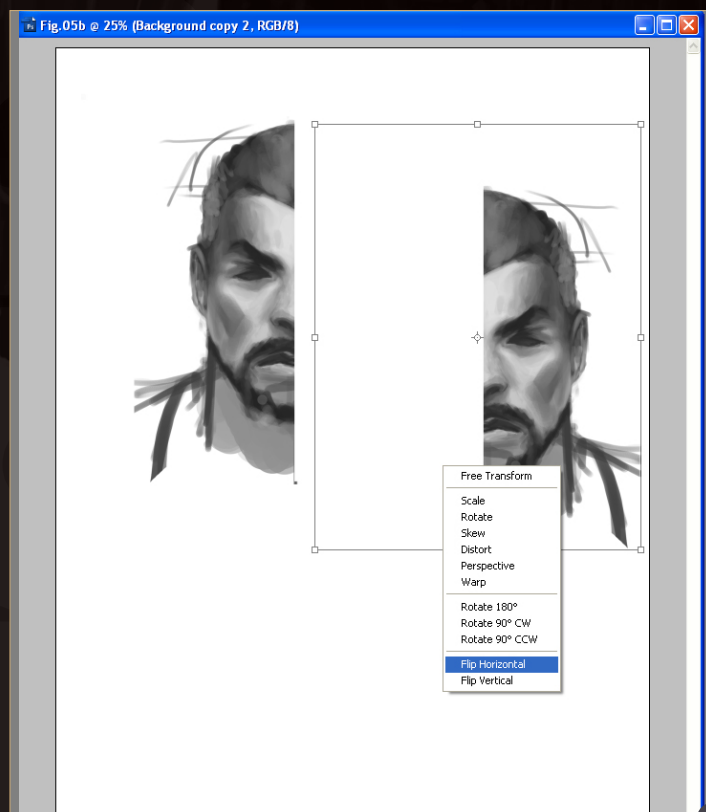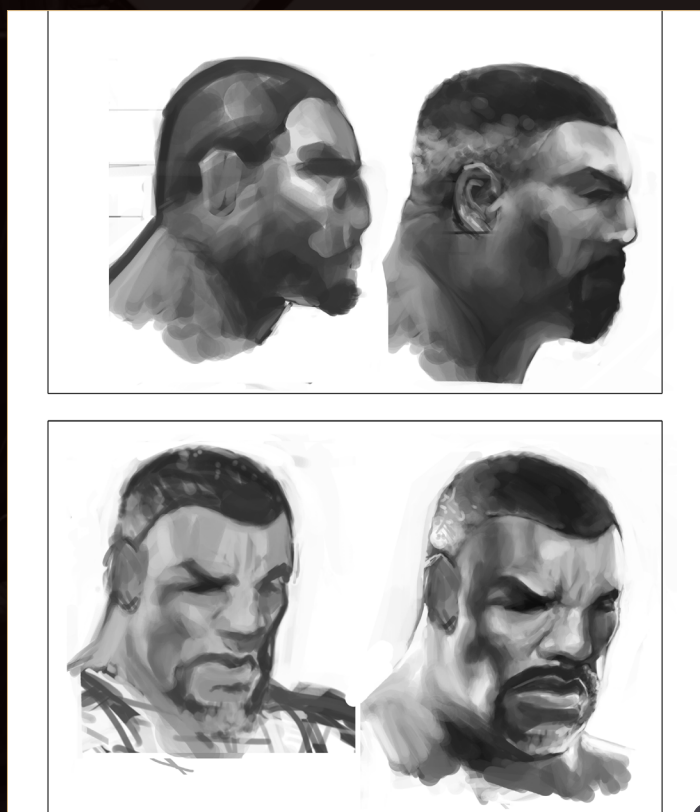
THE PRISON PLANET
THE FACES OF LEX CRANE

THE PRISON PLANET
LEX CRANE: CHIEF OF SECURITY

in the design of the rear view, it's usually not necessary to draw this for most 3D modelers. It's important not to spend time on unnecessary concept drawings, and it helps to know the ability and/or style of the modeler that will be building from your concept. For example, some modelers will need more information than others, while other artists work far better if you leave some room for interpretation. As a concept artist it's crucial to be able to recognize when you need to do more or less work, and you have to be ready and able to draw out as much detail as the next artist may need.

This is the final image of the three angles of Lex's face (**Fig.07a**). I've added some final touches like scars, and a robotic eye. This adds to the sci-fi vibe as well as emphasizes the fact that Lex is no ordinary individual.

This is the final image of Lex Crane as Chief of Security at Skye Global (**Fig.07b**).
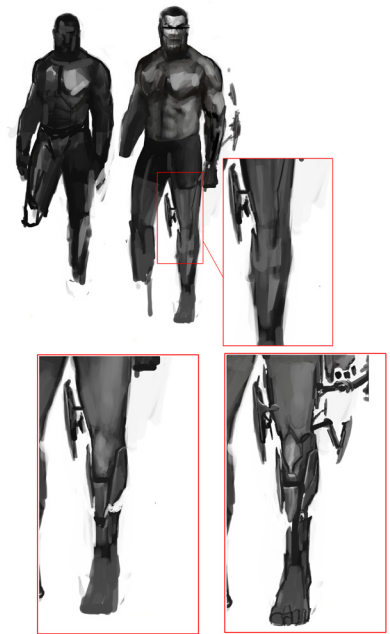
I want to accentuate the fact that Lex is not your average "Joe". So in this picture I am creating some rough elements of design on his nude body (**Fig.08**). I want to show that he is partially

robotic. Maybe he was injured in the line of duty during planetary wars or during his stint as a global military soldier (Shock Troopers).

I keep these drawings very loose since I feel that they are more for mood and tone. At this point it's not certain whether or not we would even see Lex in this "mode" during the game. I feel that it's still important to include these types of drawings because it helps the fiction to evolve. In the end there can never be too much information.

I render out the half human, half robot body a little bit further (**Fig.09**). In this picture I also try to show the physical stature of Lex. I want to show that he is very strong and muscular, even though he has the body of a man in his mid 40's.

Much like the previous images showing the nude front, I don't spend too much time detailing the back (**Fig.10 – 11**). The idea being that we will most probably never see Lex completely naked. While this is the case, it's still important to show what he would look like underneath his clothing to help the modelers, art director or game designers to understand your thought process and how and why the character looks like he does. Sometimes I'll paint a grayscale gradation bar that goes from dark to light. This helps me to keep in mind to include different values. I want there to be a successful amount of contrast in the design. I don't usually want any design to be overwhelmingly dark or light. Of course there are always exceptions to this rule depending on the specific design.

The final pose and design for the rear nude view (**Fig.12**).

I imagine that a large majority of the game will be played with Lex in his Combat Gear
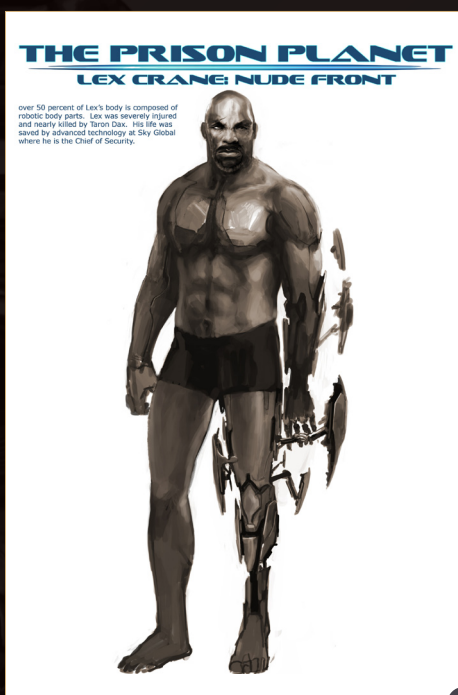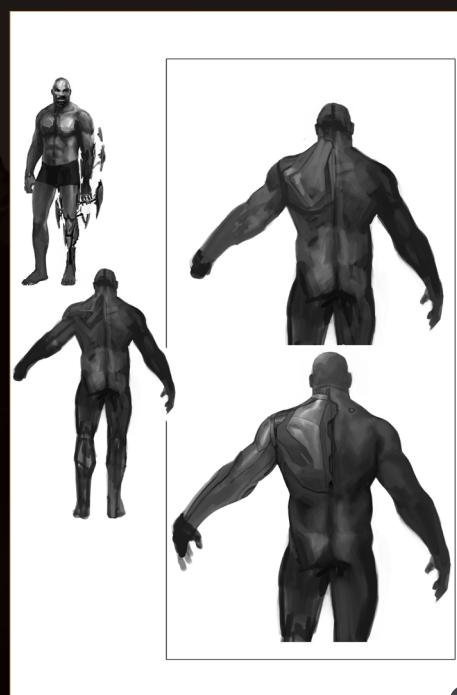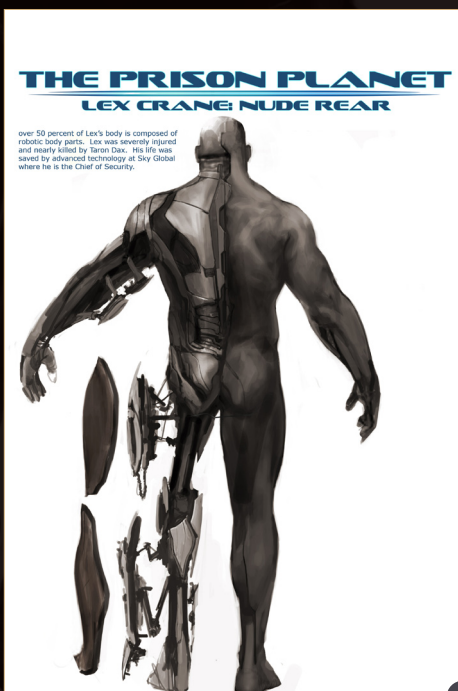
(**Fig.13**). Before Lex was wrongly imprisoned he was a decorated Shock Trooper, leading forces against enemies that threatened Earth's security. I wanted to make sure that this armor and gear felt close enough to current day military wear so that the viewer would be able to relate to it, but at the same time have the design different enough and far enough removed, so that it conveyed a science fiction feeling. I started out with a blocky rough silhouette like always. It's much easier to move forward with

this design now that I have already created the body type and face of the character. Since we already have his face designed I decide to make this concept full gear including a helmet and face mask.

I usually work initially in black and white. This helps me to focus primarily on the design without having to worry about color early on. I'm also able to keep a good degree of value range, which I feel is very important when designing

THE PRISON PLANET
LEX CRANE: NUDE FRONT

over 50 percent of Lex's body is composed of robotic body parts. Lex was severely injured and nearly killed by Taron Dax. His life was saved by advanced technology at Sky Global where he is the Chief of Security.

THE PRISON PLANET
LEX CRANE: NUDE REAR

over 50 percent of Lex's body is composed of robotic body parts. Lex was severely injured and nearly killed by Taron Dax. His life was saved by advanced technology at Sky Global where he is the Chief of Security.

characters (**Fig.14a**). Once I'm happy with the grayscale concept, I'll put a subtle color overlay on it using either the Color brush or the Color Layer option. This way I'm able to preserve the original black and white design without the risk of losing it due to my color additions.

Once I have my color wash in there I also work on specific little details, like the scratches in the armor (**Fig.14b**). This helps to show he's been in many battles. I also want to include not only contrast in values, but also in the shapes of the armor. I like to have small, medium and relatively large shapes in the designs. Again, this isn't always going to be the case with every character.

These show more images that focus on attention to detail. Every little bit helps to make the final "sell" successful (**Fig.15**).

Here is the final design of Lex Crane in his Battle Gear as a Global Shock Trooper (**Fig.16**).

Ultimately there are many different ways to achieve the same goal. From a lower level, the goal of the concept artist is to convey and create an image that fits the description of the game designer. You must be able to visualize and bring to life the ideas of people that often
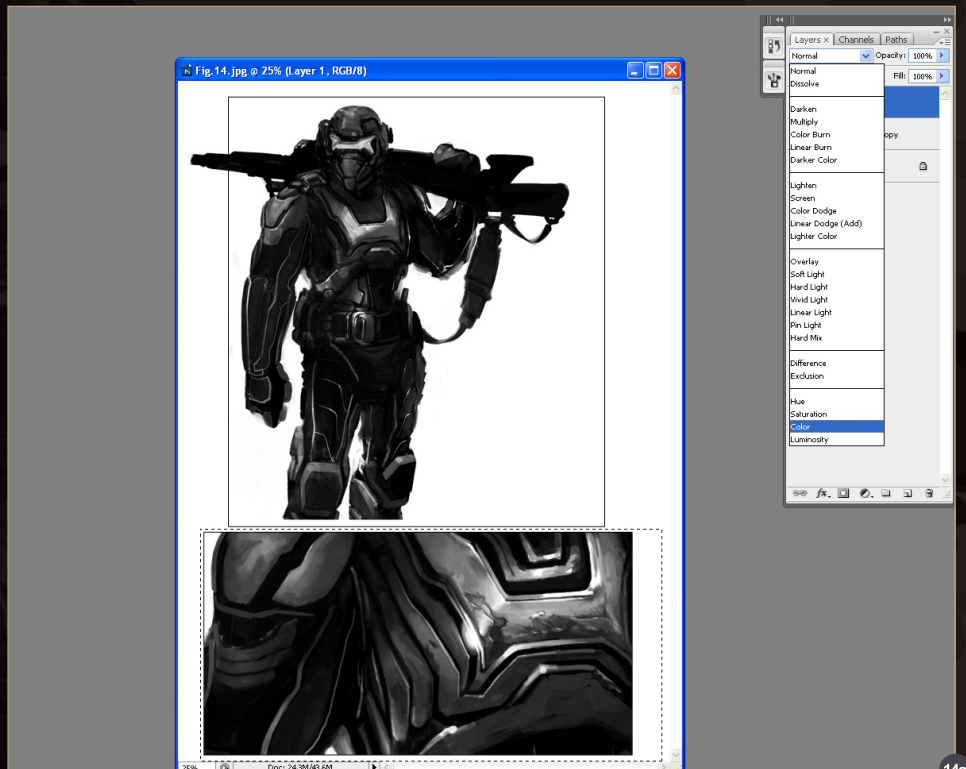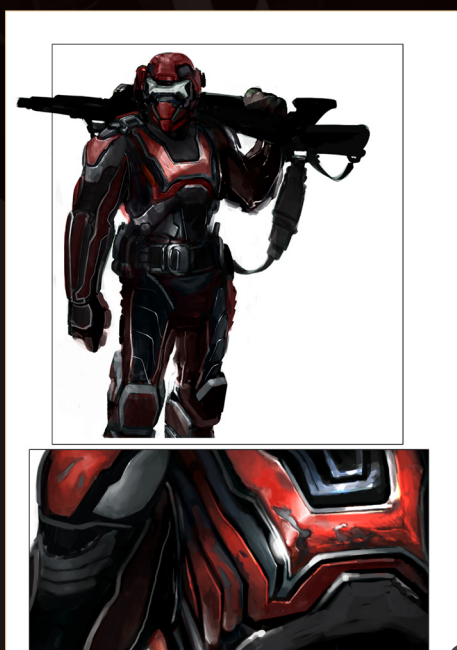
are not imaginable beyond the written word. It's important to be able to do this in a quick and timely manner as well as creating as many different ideas as necessary in order to satisfy the "client".

From a higher level the concept artist must be able to create imagery and concepts that stand out from what has already been seen. Being unique is very difficult in today's very
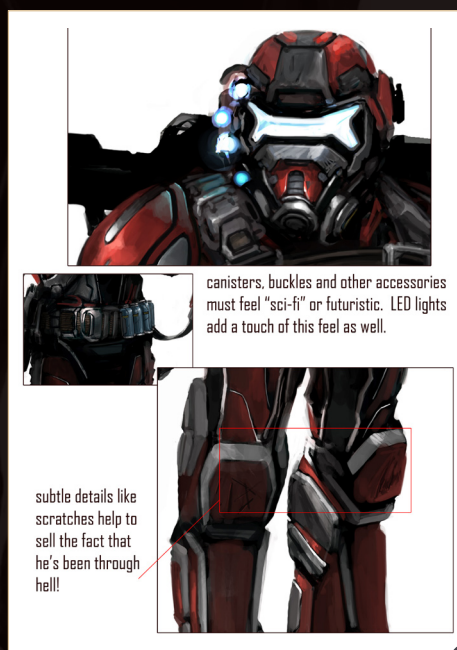
competitive game's industry. If you want your game to stand out visually from the rest of the games that are out there, it all starts with the concept. You are laying down the foundation of the entire game and your designs are responsible in a large way for deciding if the game is inviting or not. Of course the entire art team plays a crucial role in developing the look and each artist is equally responsible, but if the artwork from the concept side starts out bland or forgettable, then it makes the tasks that much more difficult for the rest of the team.

I hope that I was able to give you some insight into the pipeline and development of characters from the concept level of video games. While many different artists have different techniques and tricks of the trade, I always have and will maintain that the only thing that you truly need to succeed as a concept artist, is hard work, dedication, an open mind, and a passion for the craft!

Thanks for checking out my tutorial and please feel free to contact me with any questions or comments.

canisters, buckles and other accessories must feel "sci-fi" or futuristic. LED lights add a touch of this feel as well.

subtle details like scratches help to sell the fact that he's been through hell!

THE PRISON PLANET
LEX CRANE: SHOCK TROOPER

Bart Tiongson

For more information please visit:

http://riceandeggs.blogspot.com/

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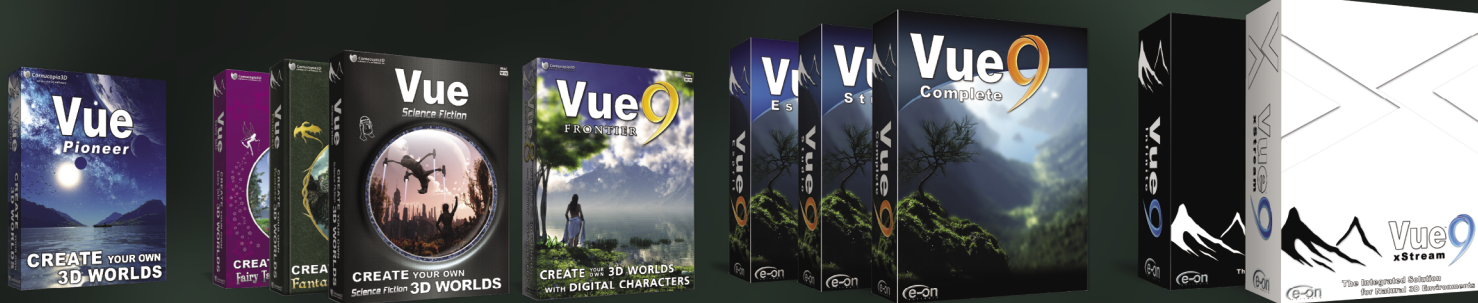
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Vue 3D ENVIRONMENT COMPETITION *2010*

Vue artist Laurent Rodriguez:
"Promenade", winner

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Vue artist Oliver Regueiro:
"Over The Clouds", first runner up

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FUTURISTIC MARINES

Futuristic soldiers and marines appear in many pieces of digital art. We see them in huge sci-fi scenes or even as a lone soldier wandering in a deserted landscape. They regularly feature in first person shooter computer games and even on the covers of books and comics. In this tutorial series our artists will be showing us how to create an original futuristic soldier that could live and thrive in some of the different environments a marine may face. The artists will also explore different methods of creating futuristic and organic armour and weaponry.

Painting Futuristic marines - Female Marine

Software used: Photoshop

Introduction

First let me say that it was a pleasure doing this tutorial for the great team over at 3DTotal. Creating a tutorial can sometimes be a very easy thing for an artist, assuming they're creating art that they've done many times before. This was not the case for me on this one!

I was asked to do one of four tutorials, the theme being "Futuristic Marines". At first I thought, "cool, I'll just create some badass marine, no problem". Then I saw what the other artists were doing and well, the slightest bit of intimidation set in. Then I thought, "damn, I

better do something real original or else this isn't going to work!"

Thankfully, the gang at 3DTotal let us come up with our own vision of a futuristic marine. So one idea I suggested was, "a badass, post-apocalyptic, superhot female marine". They loved it, and I loved them for that, because I don't do many finished pieces with females in, so this would certainly give me the opportunity.

This image was to be first and foremost, super sexy! Anatomy was going to play a big part, as I wanted to show as much of it as possible.

As I progressed, I decided on a locker room feel, perhaps a post-battle hangout. But I also wanted it to have a model shoot vibe as well, hence the "posed" poses.

I used no references for the females except my trusty male anatomical sculpture (**Fig.01**).

During the painting, there came a point where I decided to take it from a comic looking "colored line drawing, to a full on painting. This meant removing the ink line and rendering the forms realistically.

Sketches

As with most of the art I do, we're going to start with sketches first. Most of the time I sketch right into Photoshop, but this time it's basic pen on paper. There's definitely a freedom in that... no layers, no fancy brushes; just you, one tool, and your imagination. Since I already know the subject - a badass female marine - it's easy to come up with several ideas. As I'm sketching away, I start thinking maybe I should do two
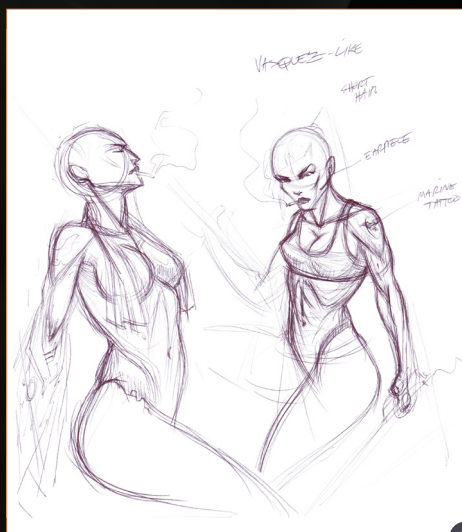
characters, and after some more sketching, I think, "why not a group of hot badass girls?" (**Fig.02 - 06**).

do have a bit more control. I'm using a regular brush with a tapered edge to do the clean up on all the characters. This is not my usual

process, as I like to go right into painting, but I wanted this tutorial to reveal more of my thought process.
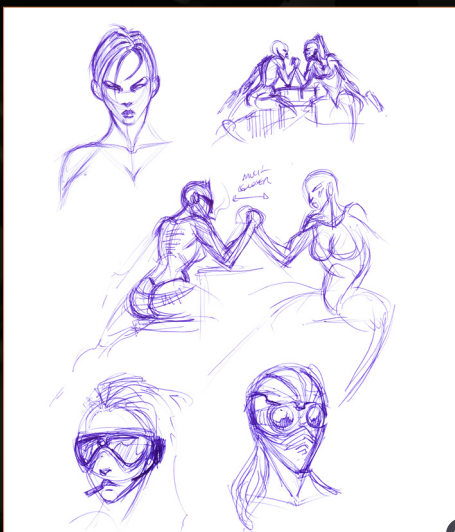
Deciding on Final Sketches

In **Fig.04** you can see the direction I'm taking the piece in. The sketch is not pretty, but at this point it is all about ideas and the overall concept. It has that locker room feel that I want. It's also a little playful, and of course, sexy!

Scan and Clean Up

After scanning the drawings in and compiled them, the arduous clean-up process begins! Cleaning up a drawing in Photoshop can take a while as opposed to doing it on paper, but you
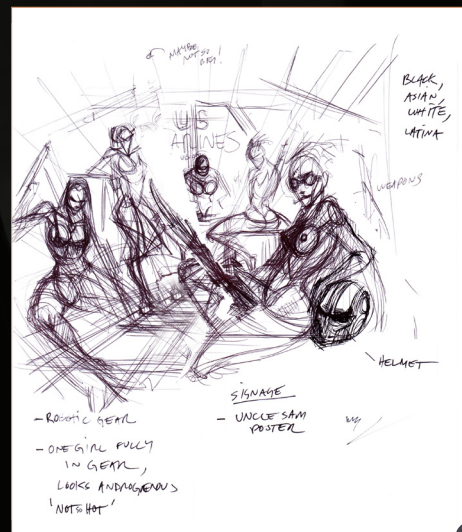
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Separation Using Lasso/Paths

I've got each character separated on their own layer, so I can't compose the image by moving the characters around as I go along. During this process, I'm making Paths for the characters as well, to further fine tune the edges and overall silhouettes. When you make a path, you simply select the image either with the wand or by hand with the Lasso, and in the paths palette, click on Make Work Path from Selection. Once you've done that, you can now edit that path using the pen tool to refine the path. I'm editing the paths all the way through the painting process so I have precise control over edges and silhouette (**Fig.07 – 10**).

Quick Value Studies

When I'm working on a piece, I like to jump ahead using values (black, white, gray) and see how the composition reads. You can find mistakes in your drawings and composition

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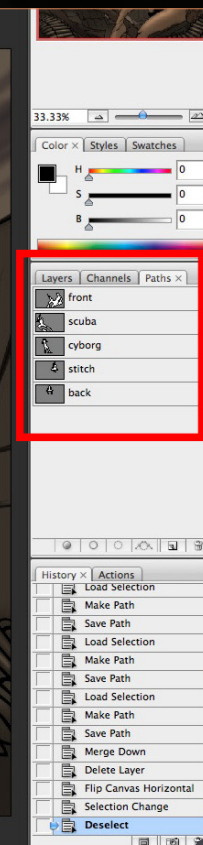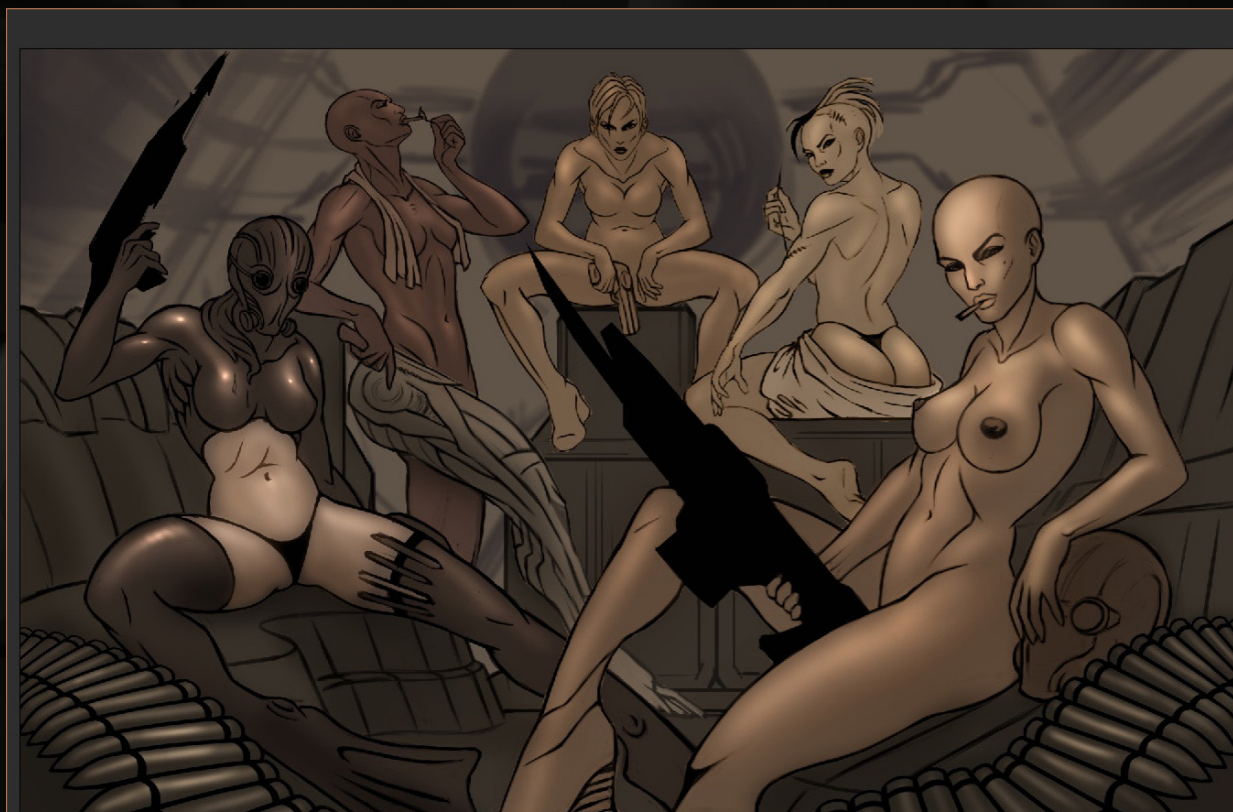
by doing this. This also helps break up the mundane clean up phase (**Fig.11 – 13**).

Adding Color

This can simply be done by using overlay and soft light layers over your values. But you want to build up the color, because it can look very fake if you overdo it at the beginning. It's better to start with very low saturation for the base color, and gradually build on it from there (**Fig.14**).

Painting/Rendering Forms

This is where you take lines and turn them into forms. This is the main difference between drawings and paintings. Both have unique qualities about them, but just because you can do one well, doesn't mean you can do the other.

Anatomy

The one thing I stress to all my students (and

myself as well), is that learning anatomy is key in becoming a good artist. It's important to understand where things connect, how it moves, and the overall form of the bone/muscle, etc. This is the one area, if you get it wrong, that can throw the whole painting off, which is why you have to put the time into taking life drawing classes, and studying and copying from books to get to grips with the basics. I've always said "if you can draw the figure well, then you'll be able to draw animals well". From there, creatures and robots will come much, much easier.

Details

This part of the process can be very fun, assuming you've done most of the hard work! The dog tags are a fun little detail that I have created in a separate file. You can then play around with drop shadow effects and bevel/emboss effects (**Fig.15 – 18**).

The rifle I've created for the main girl is composed of various machine and weapon photography that I've compiled earlier into a weapon asset sheet (**Fig.19**). You can add the Marine tattoos by using a clipart of the standard marine tattoo, and setting the layer blending mode to Overlay (**Fig.20**). I've brought in a few other images of mine to add subtle technology around the image (**Fig.21**). Finally, adding little things like highlights and reflections can really bring a piece to life, so remember to experiment!

Textures/Finishing Touches

I'm looking for a subtle 'grungy' quality to this, so let's bring in grungy textures and set them to Overlay and Soft Light blending modes, erasing what you don't. I've also decided to create an alternate image to make it look like an old vintage postcard, basically by taking it back to grayscale, and adding a subtle sepia tint (**Fig.22**). This was done using Adjustment Layers, found at the bottom of your layers palette (**Fig.23 – 28**).

Conclusion

I had a great time working on this, and as I mentioned before, this image was somewhat

unusual for me. Most of my work is very conceptual; the artists I'm most compared to being H.R. Geiger and Andrew Jones (which is an absolute honor), though we see none of that sensibility here as I wanted to try something different. My point being, that you must challenge yourself as an artist, and that means as a human being as well. Try to incorporate new ideas all the time, study things like history, engineering, philosophy, and apply some of those concepts in your work. And of course, don't forget to draw sexy ladies from time to time (**Fig.29**).

Now get back to creating art, my friends!

Alex Ruiz

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Painting Creatures From
FOLKLORE

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Fantasy plays a huge part in digital art. It influences thousands of artists from around the world and has become a large part of the film and gaming industry. So much of what we see within this genre is drawn from fairy tales and folklore. In this tutorial series our artists will be showing us how to research creatures from folklore and use this gathered information to create an original and accurate depiction of these fantasy characters.

THE WHO IS WHO OF FAERIE TALES
A short history

Everybody seems to know about Faeries, but not many seem to know about their background, or what these creatures are. So, before we start painting them, lets do some backtracking into folklore history.

Straight from Wikipedia, we get this introductory definition:

"A fairy (also faery, faerie, fay, fae; euphemistically wee folk, good folk, people of peace, fair folk, etc.) is a type of mythological being or legendary creature, a form of spirit, often described as metaphysical, supernatural or preternatural."

This all sounds rather lovely. However, most stories about Faeries tell us that they are mostly anything but good, warning us of their maliciousness, and advising us to protect ourselves against them through various means.

Where these beings came from or what they represent is unclear. The souls of the dead, children's laughter, Gaia's servants, messengers of the in between, or the middle ground between man and angel. Take your pick. It is also unclear when they first emerged in folklore, although variations on the theme can be found all around the globe, from ancient civilisations until today.

Another thing that seems to cause some confusion is their size. Human size or barely as big as your finger? - No one knows.

01

Painting Creatures From Folklore: Chapter 02 - Fairy

Software used: Photoshop

The moment we set foot into the world of Mythology and Folklore, one of the first creatures that has a tendency to pop its head out of the often not so metaphorical woodwork are the Faeries - or one of their numerous relatives, from Elves via Pixies to Faes and back again. The artists who have captured them are just as numerous, from traditional greats such as the Godfather of Faerie Art, the one and only Brian Froud, to digital Glamour Faerie queens such as Linda Bergkvist. We can go back in time, too, and look at some of the old masters that fell victim to the spell of Faerie art, such as Henry Fuseli and William Blake - even before the Victorian era where the craze really took hold.

One thing most of these have in common, though, is that the Faeries were portrayed as human looking (although Froud is known to have introduced some truly cruel and gruesome looking Elves into our minds). But what is about Faeries that seems to fascinate people? Where does all this come from? Or more to the point, where do Faeries come from? (**Fig.01**).

All this sounds rather botched up to me, "too many cooks" and all that jazz, which from an artist's point of view is just great, because it means we can do as we please.

Some of you who know my work will wonder why I was asked to shed some light on how to paint them, as I myself am a self-proclaimed and avid Faerie avoider (if not hater). Someone's idea of a joke, no doubt, or psychological warfare - the jury is still out on that. In any case, you'll have to deal with my idea of these creatures, whether you like it or not.

So let's find out what that idea is, and have a look at how to paint these elusive things, making use of Photoshop and our trusty Wacom tablet.

Nature's Law

Unlike Murphy's Law, this does not mean you will probably tread on a Faerie if you stop looking for them. It just means we have to start seeing the world with different eyes. There will be no gorgeous gowns or glitter - no self-respecting Faerie would be seen dead wearing such cumbersome and camouflage-defeating things. No. We will take a hint from nature and transfer the concept of its perfection onto its supposed guardians (or devils, depending which side you come down on). This is simpler than you may think. Let's have a look at the list of things to consider:

1. Faeries are never seen (no "but", Period!)
2. We all know that feeling of being watched, even though we know we are alone
3. We all know how some inanimate objects seem to have a mind of their own.

So now, let's take a step back from the tacky postcard racks in New Age shops around the world, and instead use our imagination for a moment.

Let's stick with a humanoid figure for starters. Why? Because familiarity is good, no matter what. To be able to somewhat identify with a fictitious creature is what makes us like them. And now let's take a look at insects, or more specifically the Praying Mantis (**Fig.02**). Yes, that's my fingers in the picture, and that's a fully grown female Green Mantis.

The green Praying Mantis is, however, by far the most boring looking one. If you Google the Ghost Mantis, the Dead Leaf Mantis, or the Orchid Mantis, you get the idea why I am so keen on using this insect in our search for the "ideal" Faerie: They really are quite something special.

Anyway, this particular Faerie would reside in or around orchids, nowhere else. I could give you tree faeries (separated into bark and leaf faeries, of course), water faeries, grass faeries, stone faeries or sand faeries, but I figured the Orchid Faerie would be more interesting to look at, as well as marginally dangerous. Certainly not the type you'd want to subject your pet gerbil to.

But designing one and ignoring all the others would be no good, not for any tutorial, or to get a point across.

If the Orchid Faerie is the link to something reminiscent of the past and nature, what about our modern world? Surely, with the technological advance of mankind, Faeries adapted too into the kind that crashes our hard drives, or stalls our car batteries. You get the idea. You'd not want to annoy it, because it will, without a doubt, delete your address book or leak your number to telemarketers. The Mobile Phone Faerie has several cousins, and sometimes I wonder if they switch residence when given the chance (and a USB cable).

Let's keep it simple - we want to focus on the Faeries, everything else is just extras. We need a phone (my


02

BlackBerry seemed good for this), and some orchids, and of course the Faeries. You can see I added a book as well; that's just me being facetious, seeing that I already have a certain book in mind to feature in the piece (**Fig.03**). Of course, the sketch is on a separate layer, to make it easier for us to paint underneath it. Filling the background with a color rather than leaving it white helps set the mood and also aids in getting the colors right once we start to block them in.

We're going to stick with the background for now, as I think it'll be beneficial to the Faeries. If we start with painting them, we will be very limited later in choice of colors for the background (remember, we want them to sort of blend in). So let's grab

a nice chunky brush and plop some color on the background of the canvas (**Fig.04**).

Even though this already looks quite neat, it really isn't. I normally paint props such as the

phone and book on separate layers, which I didn't do this time round - it'll make it a bit harder for me later to refine certain parts of the background, but that's okay. You may, however,

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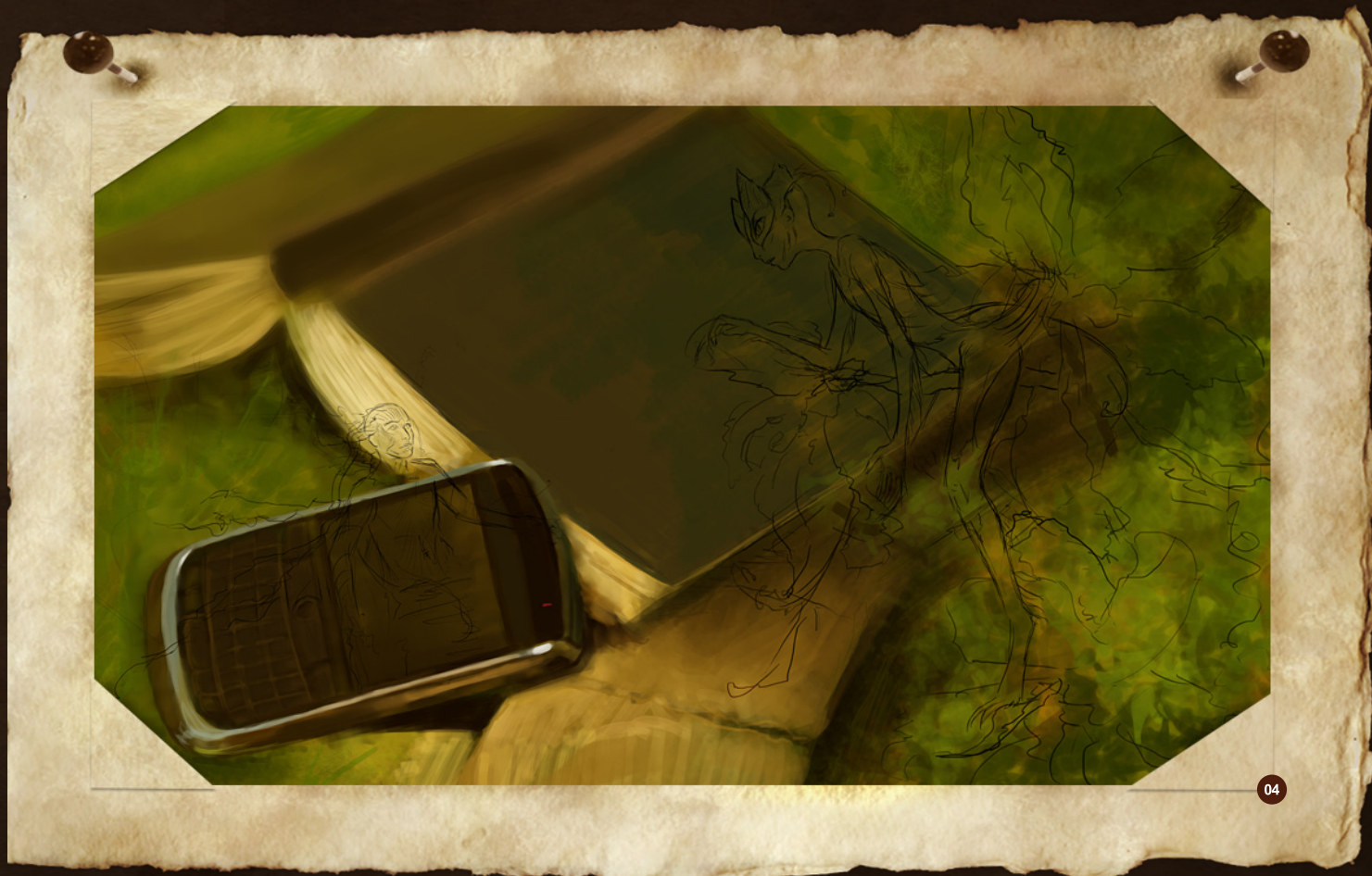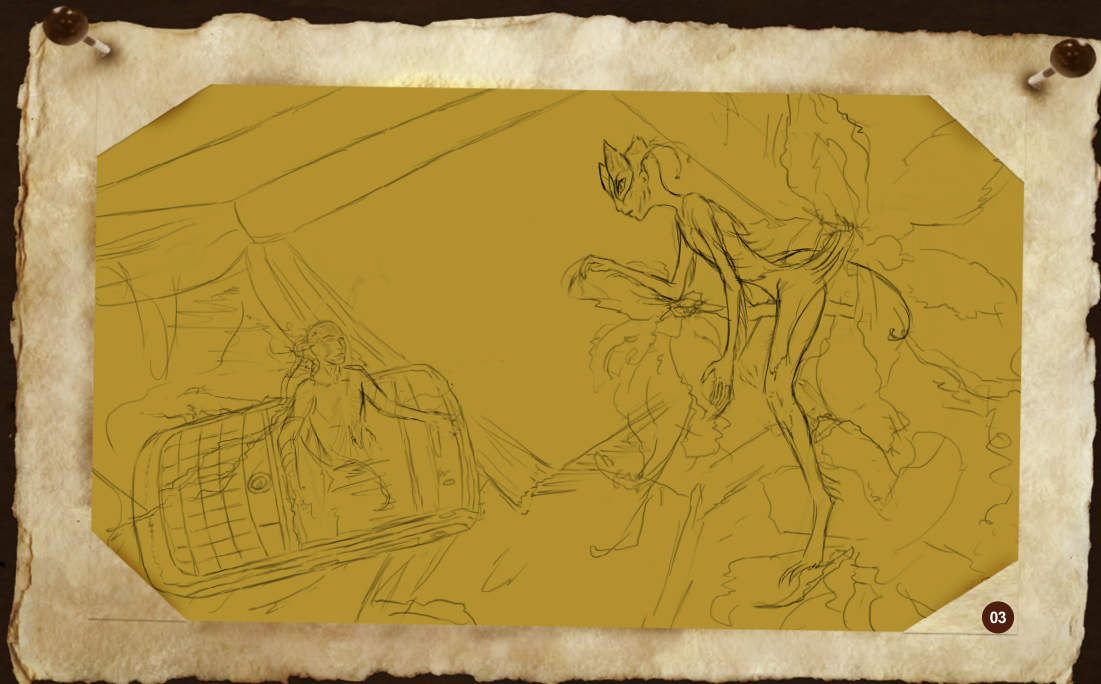
want to paint such items on separate layers.

For the orchids, I do add a separate layer and lay their colors down just as I did with the background. There's many different species of orchids, not just white and pink, so when painting these beautifully deadly flowers, have a look around online for some inspiration. (**Fig.05**) Fun complimentary colors make the image pop.

Before I continue to refine the background more to set the scene for our dear creatures, I want to get some base texture into it. Now, we can do this in several ways, like with texture brushes, or - as I choose to do here - with a texture image.

You can find royalty free photo textures in 3DTotal.com's texture library, or just go and take your own. I had taken some pictures of a patch of grass a while ago, so I'll be using one of them to work into the background (**Fig.06**).

Drag the photo over to your painting and resize it so it covers all the bits you want covered. Then erase the parts that overlap the props (which wouldn't be the case if you had your props on separate layers). To make it blend a bit better with the painting, we can apply a filter such as the Median Filter (**Fig.07**).

And to make the grass texture blend in we simply

set the layer to Soft Light, and reduce its Opacity a little if needed (**Fig.08**). There, looks much better already!

We now turn our attention back to the Orchids. Using a softer round brush than before, loosely refine the petals and stems. To blend the colors somewhat, we use the Smudge tool with a textured brush tip, with Angle Jitter set to 50%, Scatter to around 5% and Opacity to Pen Pressure. These settings stop it from looking smeary, and give you an even blending of colors.

We also add another texture photo here beneath them (**Fig.09**) and do what we did before with the grass to make it work (**Fig.10**).

Giving nature a break, let's have a look at the phone. First work it over with a standard round hard edged brush - seriously, no fuzzy here! It's a plastic and metal object, and they just don't have fuzzy edges. Once the keys look as we want them to, we can start to think about adding the key faces. Using the Type tool, choose a font that is similar to the one on the actual phone, and type out everything we see. The next part is horrendously tedious, but worth it: Rasterize the type (Layer >

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Rasterize > Type) so we can actually work with it as we need to. After that, cut out the individual letters and symbols and place them onto the keys, not forgetting to adjust their perspective (Edit > Transform)… fun!

When you can finally can say it's done, we can look at making the symbols that were not available in type, such as the arrows. Luck has it that these are available as default shapes, so we can take the Custom Shape tool, then select the arrows we need from the little menu at the top. Once again, to properly work with these
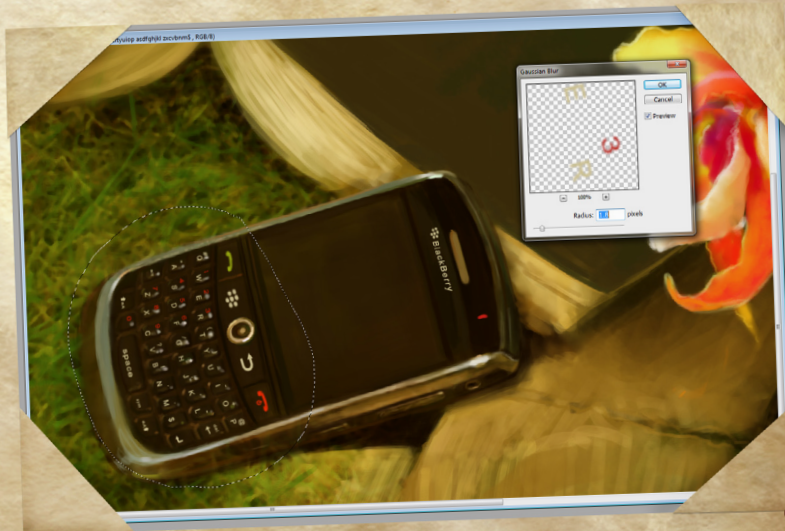
Shapes once we have them all we need to rasterize them (Layer > Rasterize > Shape). The BlackBerry Logo and the green and red receiver buttons get painted (**Fig.11**).

And we're almost there with the keys! To really make the lettering work within the painting, we need to blur them slightly. So go to Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur and adjust the settings to your liking, then hit OK (**Fig.12**).

Now let's get the book fixed up. I personally find it easiest to just use the default round Paint brush with Size Jitter and Opacity set to Pen Pressure to paint the illusion of pages and pull the edges of the cover into focus. It's a straight forward thing, really. To blend certain sections, we use the Smudge tool again (**Fig.13**).

With this out of the way, we can look at the rest of the picture again, and give it equal attention - because it needs it.

I'm not happy with the high saturation of the Orchids, so I desaturate them a little bit. Easiest way to do that is to go into Image > Adjust > Desaturate, then Edit > Fade Desaturate. Also, I am not keen on the positioning of them, so I move them about a bit until I think it looks fine. I also move one of the flowers further out and extend the stem to give the Faerie that will sit on it more space. I also add the shadows that the Orchids would throw on the stones beneath them, and heavily refine the stones themselves, first with a hard round brush for sharp edges, and then with a couple of custom brushes to bring out the texture.

And then I add the text on the book using the Type tool again,

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proceeding as before, rasterizing and adjusting its position and perspective, as well as blurring it slightly.

You may also notice I've changed the Orchid Faerie sketch slightly - the first one was just… you know, cartoony and bad (**Fig.14**).

Now that the background is at a nice level of quality, we can move on to the Orchid Faerie. As we want the creature to be nicely camouflaged, we're going to use a similar color palette for it as we used for the immediate surroundings: the orchids, grass and stone. Rather than picking colors from the painting with the Eyedropper tool, let's take a screenshot of the image and crop it to that portion of the picture instead (**Fig.15**).

Now we go into the Filter menu, go to Blur and choose the Radial Blur. Essentially, we're going to mix ourselves a palette - the fast way (**Fig.16**). The result is something very usable (**Fig.17**).

The reason I'm taking this route is because picking the colors directly from the painting won't give us enough color variation - as in, the Faerie would have the very same colors as the flowers she happens to sit on, which is not too beneficial - for the Faerie, or us. Camouflage = good. No chance of blending in with slightly differently shaded orchids from the same family = bad. You get the idea.

So let's get started by blocking in the main colors we want to use. We add a new Layer for the Faerie of course and, using the plain round brush with Opacity set to Pen Pressure, get to work (**Fig.18**).

At this point I realize I'm not really happy with the pose, especially the arms, so I fix that and then continue refining the Faerie's overall color before even contemplating going into any kind of detail (**Fig.19**). If you're not that confident about just changing a pose at a moment's notice, you

may want to work things like this out in a new sketch before continuing. I have the (bad?) habit of changing my mind halfway through a painting about certain aspects of it, and no doubt this won't be the only time in this tutorial you'll see me go "Uh, nah…".

So now that I'm kind of happy with what I've got, I set about refining the light and shadow, and add the first details. Aside from being the

famous "yucky" stage (where things just look not as great as you would like them to), it's also the stage where you can play around a lot until you get something worth taking further. Many artists do this with thumbnail sketches, or line sketches, which is not a bad idea to be honest. I should think about taking that up…

Next up, let's refine the face a little (**Fig.20**) to get a better idea of what we're looking at.

I spoke too soon about being happy with what I've got, as here's another pose change. It's the last one, promise! Of course, we continue to refine the overall appearance of the Faerie (**Fig.21**). You may notice a vague texture on its skin, which was done with a chunky rough speckled brush, with Angle Jitter set to 50%, and Opacity and Flow set to Pen Pressure. This texture won't be very visible by the time we're finished with it all, but it may still shine through here and there and add an extra amount of… well, texture and depth.

Here's a little tip for adding the shadows of the Faerie (or in fact anything else you're painting): rather than using black, which really dulls everything down and makes things look very pasty, use a darker shade variation of the color from the surface the shadow will be on. In this case, I used a burnt orange on the yellow petal of the orchid at the top for the shadow under the arms, a slightly lighter orange for the one the leg crosses over, and a deep purple red for the shadow that grounds the left foot claw.

Once we are satisfied with how the Faerie looks - the pose, expression, some hint of details, etc. - we can look at adding more colors.

The reason why I personally prefer to start off with a more muted palette is it's easier to build up to vivid and varied colors than toning them down again, especially when working with red, orange and purple pinks - these can get oversaturated very quickly. And right now, I am not sure yet just how "in your face" I want this to be.

First of all, let's adjust the contrast slightly. I prefer doing this by using Levels, rather than Contrast (Image > Adjust > Levels), but whatever you use is really up to you (**Fig.22**).

Now, to get some inspiration for patterns, we can again look at various insects, such as caterpillars or beetles, as well as amphibians (especially some of the tropical frogs which are stunning). But really, anything goes - it's a Faerie!

A good way of adding patterns and texture is with a custom brush, be it by stamping the texture/pattern on, or using the brush like a normal paintbrush - it all depends on what you want to see in the end. Always do this on a separate Layer, so you can adjust it or delete it if you don't like it (**Fig.23**).

50% Angle Jitter on a new Layer

I add a more contrasting pattern in bright orange/red on the lower legs with a different custom brush, and accentuate it with yellow around the edges to make it stand out a bit more (**Fig.24**). This whole process is a "trial and error" thing - sometimes it works out straight away, sometimes it doesn't, so just play around and see what you think looks good, and what you like.

I'm pretty happy with the Faerie now, but there's still something missing: Wings. No Faerie is complete without them (or so we've been made to believe). Actually, I'm adding them in because the wings are what draws many people to these creatures in paintings, and also what many people seem to really have a problem with painting. I have stumbled across decent

enough Faerie paintings where the wings were just so cumbersome and weighty, that I could have used them to successfully swat the Faeries, a lot of times.

So let's take a look at what goes, and what doesn't, in relation to the Faerie in this painting. It's obviously a small creature, and one would imagine quite fast, too. The fact that it's based primarily on insects rules out feathered wings (really, those are reserved for birds and Angels).

We can also rule out the stereotypical butterfly wings, as these too are too heavy and dense looking. Besides, the word "tacky" springs to mind again. What we want here is something light and transparent. Think Dragonfly, or well, Mantis. If you check the latter up online again, you will find some stunning examples of their wings, and what they use them for, namely not just flying, exactly what we want here really.

Sketching the wings on a new Layer works best, with a small round brush with Size and Opacity set to Pen Pressure (**Fig.25**). Remember not forget the wing(s) that will be somewhat obscured behind the Faerie, or else it will fly in perpetual circles.

The first thing I do after that is attack the sketch lines with the Smudge Tool (same settings as previously described) (**Fig.26**).

Using the round Paint brush with no Size Jitter, and Opacity and Flow set to Pen Pressure, as well as manually reduced to something around about 40%, I fill the wings in and erase the bits sticking out over the lines with a soft edged eraser. Use a new Layer which you can merge with the line sketch Layer once done - that way you can change the Opacity if you wish (**Fig.27**).

Now that we have a basic transparent set of colored wings, we can work out the details. When doing this kind of work, I personally like to use separate Layers for the details I add to have more control over adjustments, which can come in very handy when painting transparent things that you wish to keep looking as transparent as possible. Duplicating Layers and playing with Layer Modes can have some great results (**Fig.28**)!

You may have noticed that I removed the obscured set of wings while working on the ones in full view. That's because there is no need to paint the other set, as we can just duplicate the one we've got once we finish it, and then adjust the perspective to work with the slightly different angle (**Fig.29**). If you have lots of Layers for your wings that cannot be merged (some Layer Modes do not like merging unless you have a solid colored layer to merge them with), put all the wing Layers into a Layer Set and duplicate that, rather than all the separate Layers.

With the wings done, we move on to the second Faerie. First of all, I want to change this one, as it's way too "Romeo and Juliette" for me. Turning the whole "corrupting files" over in my head, I figured why not use that here. Can you guess what the Phone Faerie just did (**Fig.30**)?

Before going any further with the arm, let's see about making the screen come to life with a fuzzy brush in an almost white color. I employ the Noise Filter to make it a bit more convincing, then duplicate the Layer and set it to Overlay (**Fig.31**).

Happy with that, I go back to the arm and refine it, using various shades of electric blue and turquoise (**Fig.32**).

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Now we just need to make it work where it pops out of the screen. Also, it would be nice to make that Faerie a little bit more… sci-fi. Let's take down the opacity of it to make it more transparent, like a hologram (**Fig.33**), then duplicate the layer and set it to Overlay (**Fig.34**), and to make it a little brighter, we can adjust the Levels of the original arm Layer until we have something we like (**Fig.35**).

Of course, we will have to add some reflective glow on the phone and surroundings, but we will do that in a little while. First I would like to continue with what the little guy actually did in the phone. Well, let some photos disappear, of course. Most likely our Orchid Faerie accidentally got caught on camera as the reader of the book took some pictures of the Orchids,

and now all evidence has to be deleted.

To add the delete confirmation info on the screen (**Fig.36**), I just used the Shape tool and selected the Rounded Rectangle, rasterized the shape (Layer > Rasterize > Shape), then added the white border by using the Layer Styles (Layer > Layer Styles > Stroke…) and the shadow, also with Layer Styles. I did the same for the blue "OK" button then added the text. After merging the layers, I adjusted the position of the info box to match the perspective of the screen, and gently erased parts of it to blend in better. Some slight blurring and then adding Noise helps!

Righty…

Now that we have all the major elements done, let's concentrate on the loose ends that need tying up. First, I reduce the Opacity of the book's title, as it seems a bit too much. I also notice that there is a distinct "gap" right in the middle of the picture, an invisible line drawn between Orchid and Phone. To close that gap a little and make the image work better, I grab the Orchids with the Faerie

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there, and using the Median Filter and also the Blur tool make them blend in with the already existing texture. I also add another photo texture behind the Orchids, and layer it with a brush texture (**Fig.39**).

Great! I think that's pretty much it on the active painting side of things, and it's time to look at the very last overall adjustments.

I've started the habit of making a copy of my work (Image > Duplicate), so if I don't like what I do in the end, I can re-open the original file and start over.

The first thing I tend to do is individual Levels adjustment to either even out the contrast, or to pop out certain parts of the image. After that, I flatten the image (Layer > Flatten) to once more adjust the Levels, and also to play with the Variations (Image > Adjustments > Variations). These are all very subtle adjustments, but often have a great impact (**Fig.40**).

Now it's time for the reflective blue glow I mentioned earlier around the Phone Faerie's arm. For this, I add a new Layer and set it to Linear Glow, then take a fuzzy round brush, pick a bright blue, and carefully paint the light. Duplicating the Layer and setting it to Overlay, and then adjusting the Opacity of both Layers will give you some nice results. - I don't want the glow too strong, just a hint. If you want it stronger, remember to add some actual highlights to the items closest to the glow. I put a little on the Orchid Faerie's face and hands (rather, claws) for subtle effect, as that lifts its face off the book in the background (**Fig.41**).

I add another Layer set to Overlay and, picking a warm yellow/ orange color, I carefully light the Orchid Faerie and everything that

and nudge them further to the left (**Fig.37**). Linking all the affected Layers before doing that is advisable here, as it saves you having to shift them individually. Then I crop the canvas, using the Cropping tool, and also resize the Orchids and Faerie a little, making them bigger (**Fig.38**).

Next up, add some more details to the background. Where the Phone Faerie's arm is, I blur the bits behind it, as whatever is behind it would probably not be as clear but rather like looking through a frosted or smudgy glass.

I also want to add a little more detail to the grass. Using a custom brush that looks and acts a bit like a palette knife, with Size and Opacity set to Pen Pressure, I randomly paint grass stalks here and

41

is not within reach of the blue glow. The result should be visible, but not over the top, just enough to really pop the Orchids and Faerie as the main attraction in the painting (**Fig.42**).

We flatten the image again, and adjust the Levels one last time if needs be.

We're pretty much done now, but to really finish off the painting, we may want to consider adding some focal blurring. It's easiest at this stage to do this by hand with the Blur tool. But carefully, as it's quickly overdone, and we want to avoid that. We want everything still clearly visible. Just soften the edges of some of the things that would be slightly out of focus.

And there we have it!

Happily Ever After

So, it is possible to paint these creatures without glitter or the token butterfly wings… and even if you're a fan of the classical Fae, there were hopefully still some things that you found useful.

Now go and get your pins and glass jars ready, and catch yourselves some Faeries. Happy Hunting!

Nykolai Aleksander

For more from this artist visit:
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Image by Craig Sellars

SCI FI
CUSTOM BRUSHES

Custom brushes are not only a great way to increase the speed at which a painting can be completed, but can also create an effect that would otherwise be impossible. They can be used in many different types of scene, but many would argue that they become most useful when creating a space scene. In space many items need replicating or reproducing in vast quantities, which can be difficult, but custom brushes can make this process much easier and simpler. In this series the artists involved will be showing you how to create brushes to improve your scene and how to use them to the best effect.

DOWNLOAD RESOURCES

– Free Brushes

Custom Brushes For Sci-Fi Chapter 4 - Underground Corridor

Software used: Photoshop

Introduction

I have focused this tutorial on some of the elements you can find in underground corridors, such as wires, tubes, volumetric light from vents, and other typical sci-fi architectural elements. These small elements may seem superfluous but an image looks better when its smaller parts work perfectly. My intention is not to show the reader how to draw underground corridors, but how to design brushes to help him in the process. I always recommend gathering photos and illustrations of sci-fi environments to have a good collection of images that will help you to create brushes.

Custom Brushes to Draw Tubes

First of all, you have to know what kind of tube or wire you want to paint in the scene. I have selected a corrugated tube photograph. The geometry is easy, but drawing it without a custom brush will be boring and hard. It has a repetitive pattern along its length and we can design two brushes to draw it depending of the perspective of each segment (**Fig.01**).

These patterns must have rotation controlled by the stroke direction. Photoshop allows us to position the brush image depending
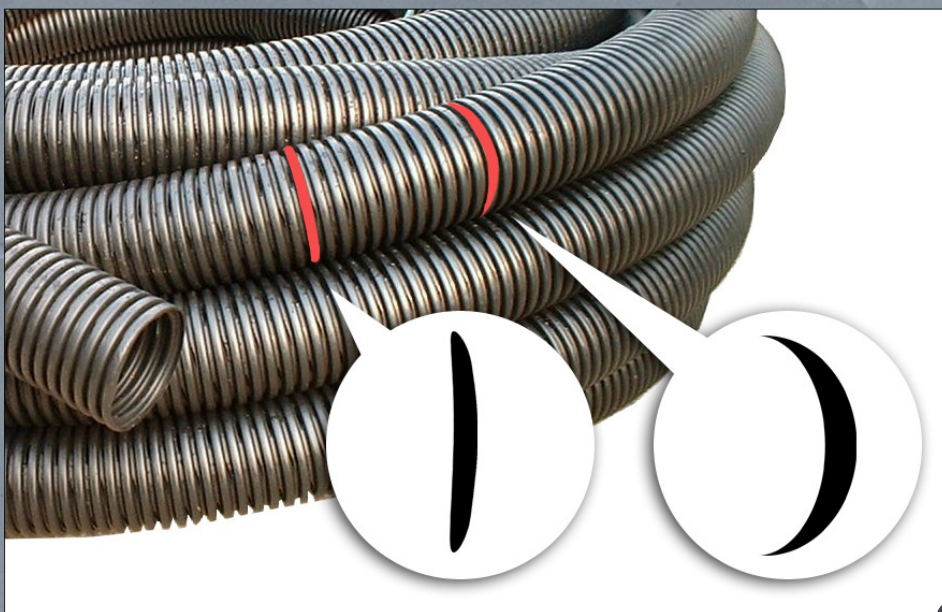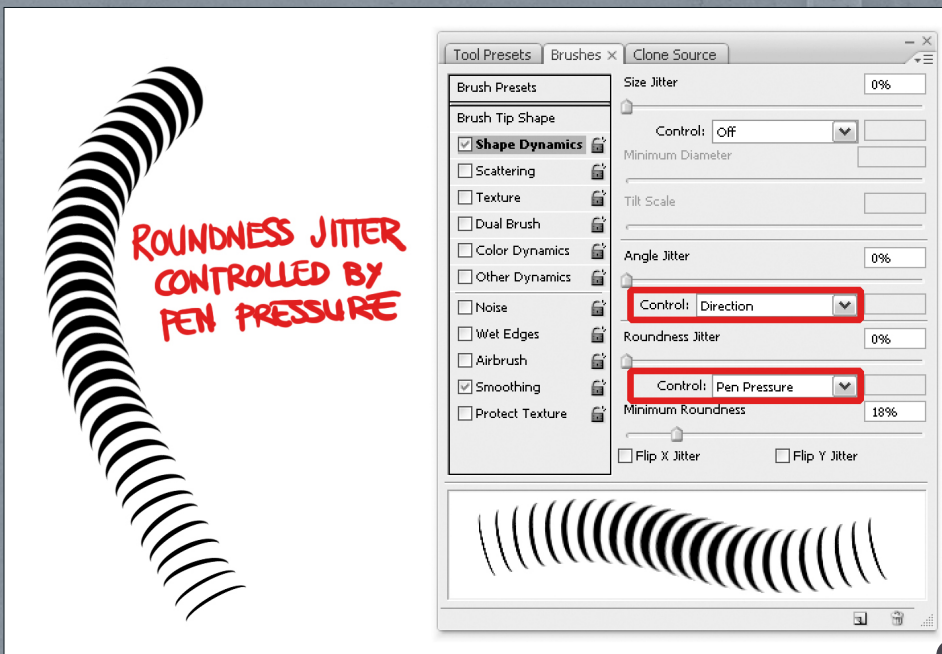
on the movement and direction of the pen. You only have to change the Angle Jitter

control parameter to Direction and control the roundness jitter with the Pen Pressure to simulate perspective (**Fig.02**). Unfortunately we can't convert our brush parameters to create a straight line (if we set the Roundness to 0%, the shape disappears). Because of this I have designed two brushes (to cover all perspective possibilities) (**Fig.03**). You'll find these among the free brushes provided with this tutorial.

We are going to view this brushes in action. First, I create a layer and draw the tube in solid color with a normal round brush (I have used a light tone to do it). If the size of the brush is
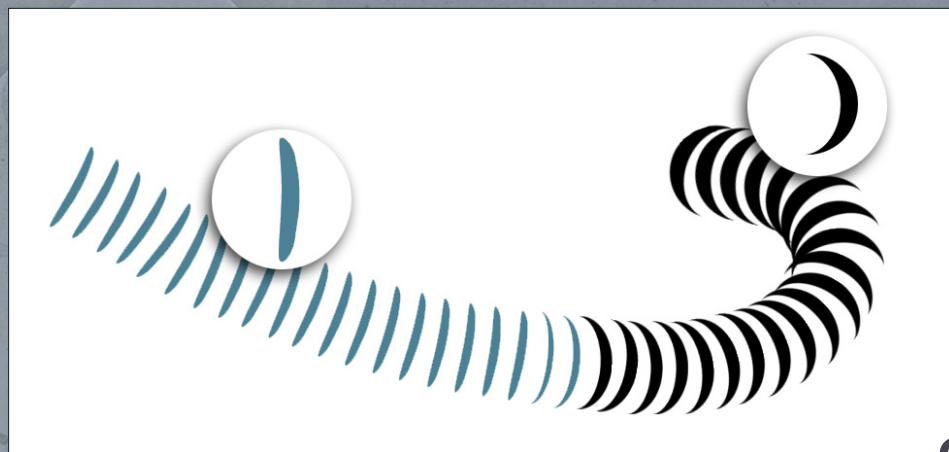
affected by pressure, you can vary the size of the tube to simulate perspective (**Fig.04**). I lock the layer to shade the tube with a normal aerograph-shaped brush (**Fig.05**). Then, in another layer, I select the brushes I designed before to draw the corrugated surface of the tube in a darker tone (**Fig.06**). I have used the two brushes I designed before (marked numbers 1 and 2) to show the importance of the perspective.

Try different types of tubes, changing the brush spacing or creating new shapes for the tube segments. Take a look at the tube on the top of **Fig.07**. I have drawn it with two brushes *("Tube 2")* that you can find in the set of brushes that comes with this tutorial.

A Lot of Wires

Wires are common elements in underground sci-fi environments. The main problem when drawing wires is not the wire itself, but creating a quantity of them. We have two options when facing this task: Draw each wire with a single round brush, or create a brush that paints a set of wires. The second option allows us to draw a set of cables at once with the advantage of maintaining the same space between them. I created a new brush pattern with three circles (**Fig.08**). We need to control the size with the pen pressure. If necessary, try the brush to paint different angles that show perspective (**Fig.09**). I have rotated the pattern slightly to draw the
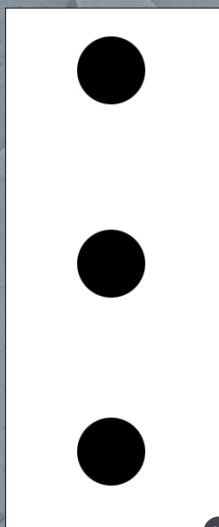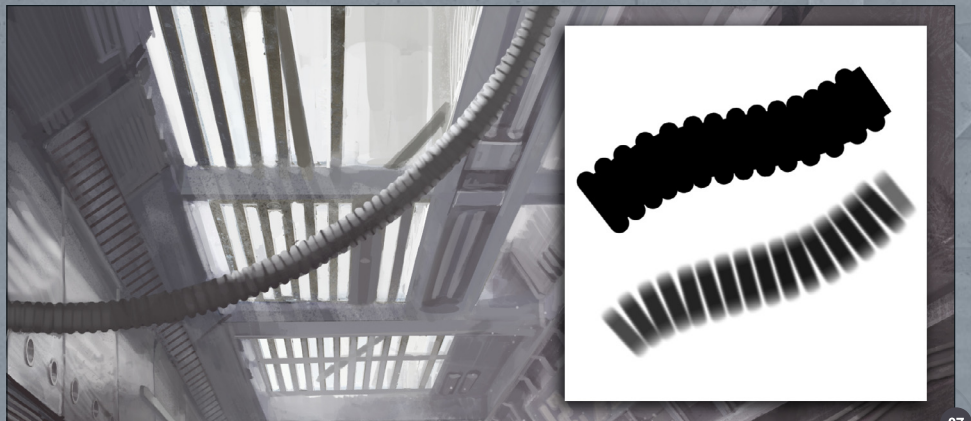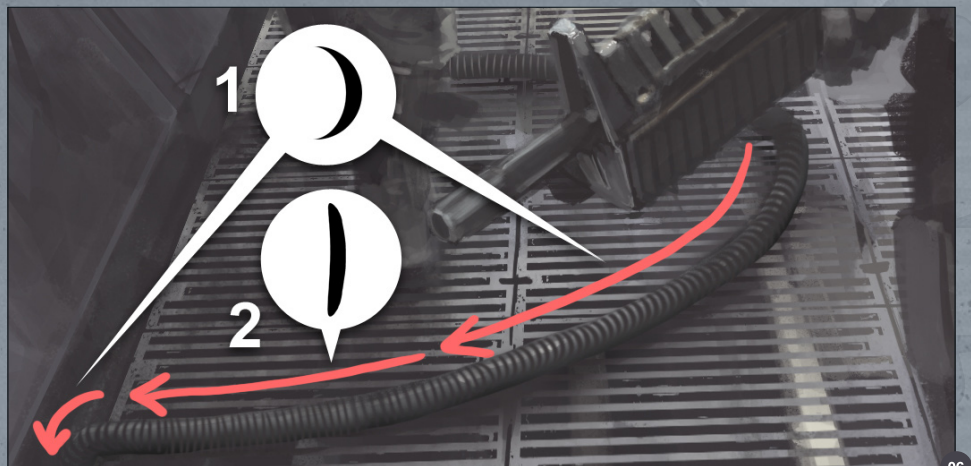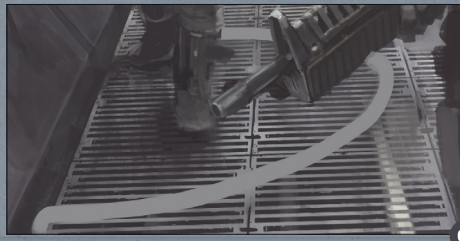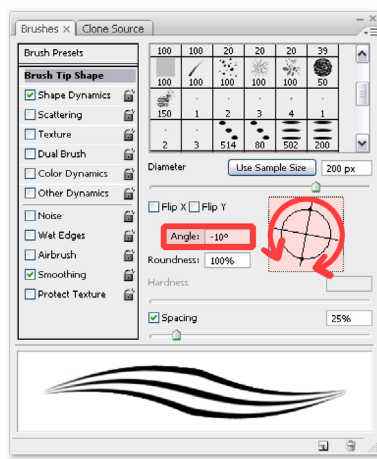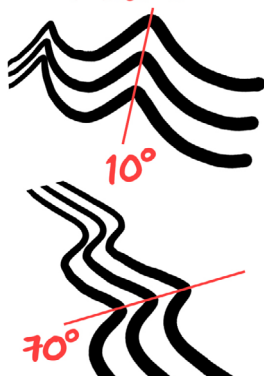
wires in a new layer and create a credible perspective (**Fig.10**). Finally, I have locked the layer to shade the wires (**Fig.11**).

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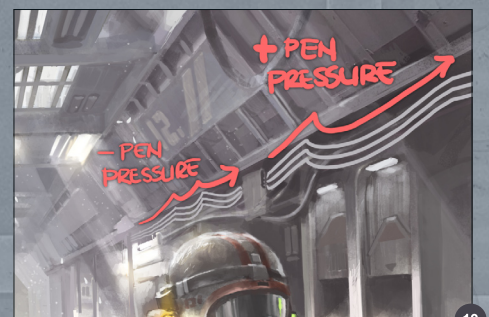
This brush may be as complex as you need it to be. Try adding more wires of different thicknesses. There are thousands of configurations.

Drawing Volume Light from Vents

Volumetric light in an illustration can be a doubled-edged sword for an artist. The effect can be great and stunning. On the other hand, creating credible lighting is difficult and many artists add exaggerated effects that ruin the final image. The volumetric light must be considered as part of the image composition. I would recommend that you do not force its inclusion. In my corridor image, I decided on the area of volumetric light right from the start. An area of lighter tones is perfect to define an image (**Fig.12**), but what can I do to make this light look better? I need the light to appear as if it is passing through vents or grills. To show this effect I have designed an easy brush.

The first step is creating a brush pattern similar to a single ray of light (**Fig.13**). To create a new custom brush you have to set Opacity and Flow Jitter to 100% to simulate different light intensities passing through the ceiling vents (**Fig.14**).

Applying this to the image is easy. First make a straight horizontal stroke in a new layer (**Fig.15**). Then, select the rectangular Marquee tool to distort the geometry of the layer and adapt it to the area and direction of the light (**Fig.16**).

DISTORT THE IMAGE

Free Transform

Scale
Rotate
Skew
Distort
Perspective
Warp

Rotate 180°
Rotate 90° CW
Rotate 90° CCW

Flip Horizontal
Flip Vertical

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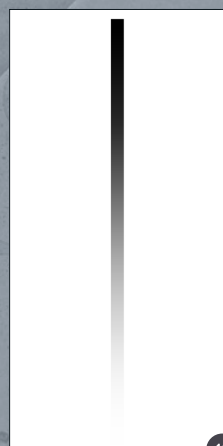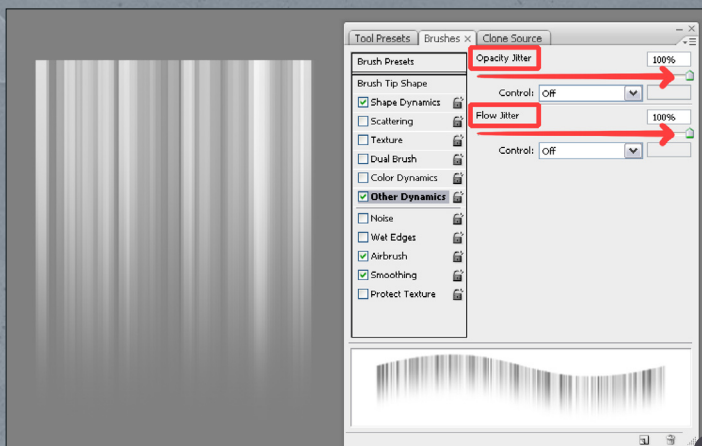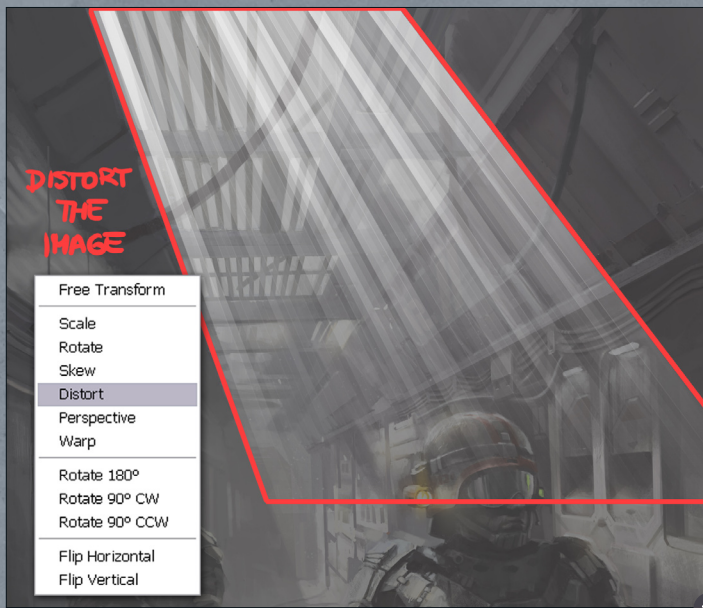
Finally, we adjust the opacity of the layer and make a few adjustments to create a good result (**Fig.17**).

Don't forget to add a dusty atmosphere in this kind of underground scene. Volumetric light appears when the air has particles and dust in it. Try the "Dust" brush I designed. It's based on a single dot with Scattering effect and Opacity,
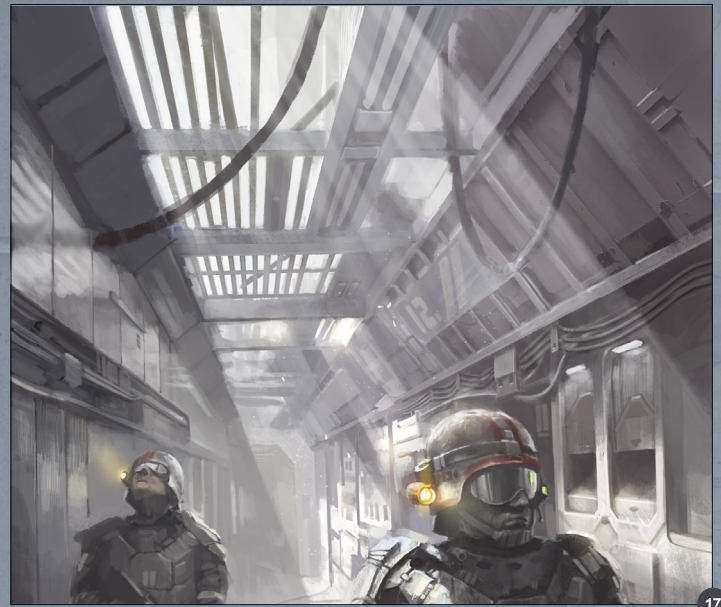
Angle and Roundness Jitter (**Fig.18**). The result is a helpful brush full of particles with different shapes, angle and intensity.

Thousands of Brushes

Let's move on to something a little easier. Most sci-fi scenes have a lot of geometric and repetitive patterns that are repeated in architecture. Grids, buttons or bolts for example, are elements that can be simplified with good brush designs. Dirt and metal reflections are also essentials for surface treatment (**Fig.19**). Take a look at the longitudinal vent on the top left corner of the corridor. A simple brush of parallel bars is enough to give complexity and realism to the environment. You only need to use it at an adequate angle and set the brush size sensitivity to pen pressure. As you can see with most of the brushes in this tutorial I have controlled the size with pressure. It's common in images with strong perspectives, because you need to work with elements that vary in size to show depth and perspective. Gathering a collection of this kind of brush makes our work faster, easy and more effective.

Creating custom brushes is a meticulous task that creates a new range of possibilities in your drawing technique. All the custom brushes I created for this tutorial are used in the image, and you can download them for free. Explore
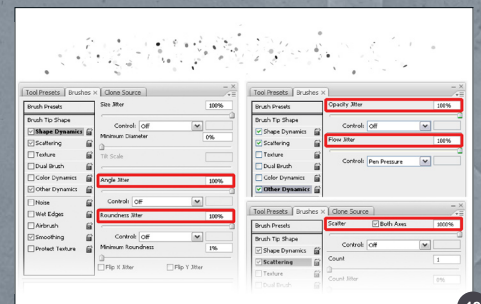
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them and design new ones to create different elements in your underground environment scenes. Before you draw any element, think for a while about how you can make it with a custom brush. Having your own set of brushes is essential if you want to achieve a more complex and personal drawing technique. The time spent creating custom brushes it is regained in the creation of your paintings.

Roberto F Castro

For more from this artist visit:
http://www.robertofc.com/index.html
Or contact them at:
contact@robertofc.com

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19

Share One Planet

Wild Animals CG Art Elites Invitational Competition

Global Commonweal
Competition
for Top CG Artists!

Top Prize: 10,000 USD
+ A Special Designed Trophy

Submission: 2010.8.1 – 2011.2.28 (BJT, GMT+8)
Judging: 2011.3.1 – 2011.4.1 (BJT, GMT+8)
Awards Announcement: 2011.4.15 (BJT, GMT+8)

Organizers
Wild Animals Cultural Project Fund, China Foundation for the Development of Social Culture
China Institute of Strategy and Management
International Association of Computer Graphic Artists
China Association for Global Development under the United Nations

Executive Organizers
leewiART International Computer Graphic(CG)Art Promoting Organization
Beijing Imperial Court Cultural Development Company LTD

Artist:
Andrew Jones

leewiART
国际数字图形艺术推广机构
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"Share One Planet" Wild Animals CG Art Elites Invitational Competition is organized by Wild Animals Cultural Project Fund, China Foundation for the Development of Social Culture, China Institute of Strategy and Management (CISM), the International Association of Computer Graphics Artists (IACGA), China Association for Global Development under the United Nations and co-organized by leewiART International Computer Graphic (CG) Art Promoting Organization and Beijing Imperial Court Development Company Ltd.. It is an art gathering on CG art platform and in the theme of wild animals' protection. "Share One Planet" is the first one who combines CG art and wild animals' protection together, invites top global CG artists for raising attentions towards the survival of wild animals. "Share One Planet" is the first global competition of "Share One Planet" series. The Organizers hope the platform of "Share One Planet" can be built for encouraging artists to create meaningful and inspiring CG works to our times, for promoting great CG artists and for raising attention to wild animals even global environment protection by employing the power of art. Winners will be awarded with prize money as well as special designed golden, silver and copper trophies. Winning entries of the competition will be first exhibited in China and then toured internationally. As one of the top CG art competitions, it won many global top CG Medias' full supports, they are: CGSociety, ImagineFX, 3DCreative and 2DArtist, 3DTotal, Chinavisual, CGW and 32D. Their participation echoes with the theme of this grand meeting and surely will be a "Share One Planet" visual of CG world.

Competition Schedules

Submission: August 1st, 2010 – February 28th, 2011 (BJT, GMT+8)

Judging: March 1st, 2011 – April 1st, 2011 (BJT, GMT+8)

Awards Announcement: April 15th, 2011 (BJT, GMT+8)

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"Pay attention to the changes of highlight on the subject, whether it is a rough or glossy surface"

Making of by Yang Xueguo

Concrete 5

If anyone knows about digital painting techniques it is Yang Xeuguo as he is an art teacher at a university in China. In this Making Of, Yang doesn't only share his thought process behind this amazing surreal art, but also gives great advice on some of the fundamental art subjects.

Making Of Concrete 5

This image was for a CG exhibition, named "Industrial Impression: Design & Creation Exhibition". I used a lot of industrial elements as fodder for the creation of this image. The purpose was to show the relationship between the development of post-modern industry and the human way of life. There wasn't any clear intention at the start of my creation process, I just blocked in some shapes at random. Then I gathered the interesting parts of them and ultimately created a final concert composition (**Fig.01**).

To make sure the sketch layer was complete before adding color, I looked at pictures of some industrial materials and then blended them into the image. The aim was to keep the style and design bold and interesting, but to also try and maintain the feel of the scene. I then added more details as I adjusted the composition. As you can see from the sketch, everything in the distance looks lighter and the colors are

stronger in the foreground. This gave a good sense of depth (**Fig.02**).

I then selected a large brush to add color to the image in a single layer. I set the brush mode to Multiply and then selected warm colors to paint on it. Multiply mode allows color to be added to the sketch transparently, and will not cover the

original sketch layer. It is a commonly used color method, but do not select dark colors or paint over it repeatedly. If you paint in Multiply mode with darker colors repeatedly in one place, it will make the image black. Making the image a little darker can enhance the tone of image and also offer a nice base tone for adding all kinds of highlights later (**Fig.03**).

With a basic color set I then began to paint in the details. I started with the tones in the distance. I tried to keep the tone and colors consistent with those in the previous sketch and the strength of the color in the distance low. To do this I decreased the color's saturation. I also kept the whole image in warm tones, making sure there wasn't too much contrast, and made sure that the only light in the scene was diffused (**Fig.04**).
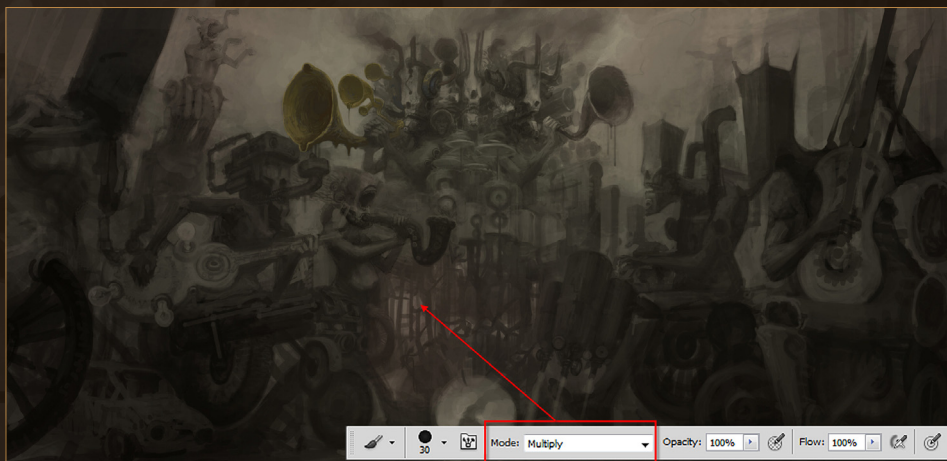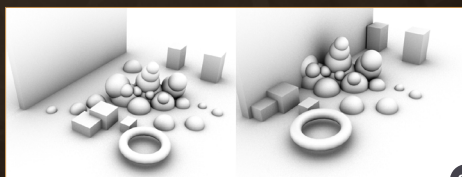
What is "diffuse"? Diffuse is when the environment has no direct light, like on a rainy day, where there is only light reflected from other objects. This usually means there is no obvious direction for this kind of light, so the shadows are not clear. The shadows created by diffuse reflections appear in the close areas between the objects. We can see how the diffuse reflection works in the following picture. If you understand this relationship then you will know where to place the shadow (**Fig.05**).

To demonstrate that a surface is hard I usually use a Hard-edged brush with 100% transparency and no feathering edge so we can portray the solidity of the item. I pay attention to the texture features (like rusted metal, concrete etc) and change the brush's size and direction depending on what you are painting (**Fig.06**).

The Smudge tool helps when blending the colors, especially when drawing the background. Here I used the Smudge tool to deal with the edge of adjacent colors. It created soft tones and shadows (**Fig.07**).

There are various ways to define details; you can use the brush to add texture or overlay a photo. I prefer to use a block-shaped brush and paint it in freely, making sure that I portray the highlights when painting. The highlights are very important and the different highlights will determine the final texture of the substance.

For instance, in this image the highlight and the strength of color are extremely different, particularly between the smooth and the rusty metal. Normally a high intensity small area highlight will make the subject look smooth and hard, whilst a soft and coarse highlight will do the contrary. It's important to pay attention to the changes of highlight on the subject, whether it is a rough or glossy surface (**Fig.08**).

With regard to light and shade; diffuse reflection is one of the elements that will set tone of the image, but there is also direct light and bounce light. In more complex images the portrayal of light on surfaces is very important, especially the bounce light, and if there is not enough bounce light the whole image will become dull and perspective will be lost. In **Fig.09** you can see the different types of light I used in this image.

The next step was to paint in all of the details, adding highlights as the last steps (**Fig.10**).

Effects were essential for this image, such as light, smoke, fire, lightning, etc. I used custom brushes to paint these effects. To paint on

FX Brush

Mode: Linear Dodge (Add)   Opacity: 100%   Flow: 100%
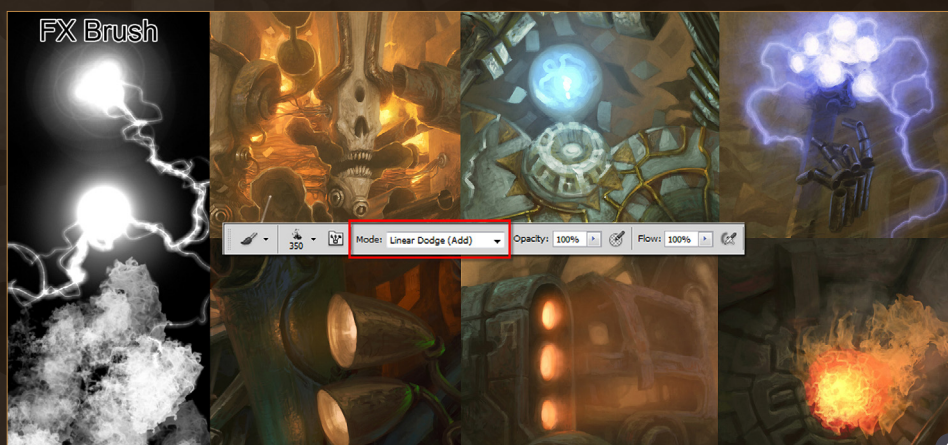
the same layer I set the brush mode to Color Dodge. To paint on a new layer, I set the whole new layer to Color Dodge mode. Then I was able to achieve a "transparent light" effect (**Fig.11**).

Here are some tips for how to make a smoke effect brush:

1. Create a new 500x500 pixel, 72DPI, pure white background layer.

2. Draw some black dots (**Fig.12**).

3. Paint a gray girth at the edge of the dots and then you can create a transparent mist effects.

4. Add "Ocean Wave" filters to it to move it closer towards a cloud effects.

5. Add "Box Blur" filters to it and soften the edge (**Fig.13**).

6. Go to Edit > Define Brush Preset and set parameters as shown in **Fig.14**.
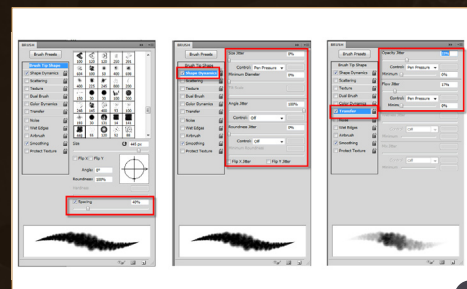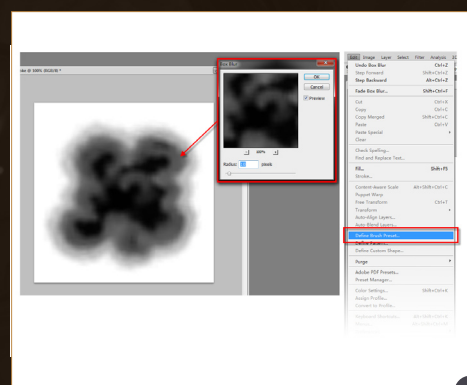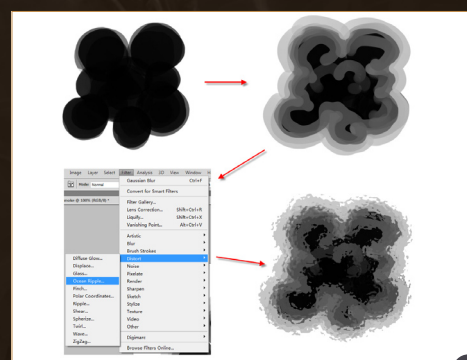
Done! I used this brush in many parts of the image. And this technique can be used to create other brushes. If you want these brushes to make a glitter effect, make sure the brush mode is set to Color Dodge (**Fig.15**).

Finally I used a uniform texture layer to enrich the texture and details. I used textures such as paper, cloth or concrete, then placed them on the top layer and modified the layer mode to Overlay. Then there was a delicate texture on the image (**Fig.16**).

Smoke Brush

Before

After

Yang Xueguo

For more information please visit:

http://seedsfromhell.blogspot.com

Or contact them at:

blur1977@126.com

YangXueguo
2010.4

DIGITAL ART MASTERS
VOLUME 5

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This month we feature:

"COWBOY VS. SANDWORMS"

by KEKAI KOTAKI

The following shots of the "The Gateway" book pages are featured here in full-resolution and can be read by zooming in...

Fig.06

make the heads appear consistent so that they looked like they were the same species. I was basically trying to draw the same sandworm head from different angles.

Fig.06 shows where I have used the same trick touched upon earlier, using an old painting that is layered over the top to create some textural detail.

> " THE CLOSER THE ELEMENT IS TO THE CAMERA, THE MORE DETAIL IT RECEIVES. IT IS JUST ONE OF MANY TRICKS AND NOT A HARD RULE TO FOLLOW "
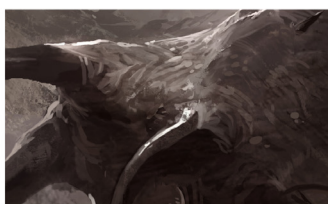
Fig.07

Fig.07 shows a close up of the main sandworm. It shows the level of detail, or lack thereof, that I go for in my images. The closer the element is to the camera, the more detail it receives. It is just one of many tricks and not a hard rule to follow.

Cowboy
When I reached this point I realized that I needed a stage for my cowboy to be able to run with the sandworms. Looking back on my original sketch (see **Fig.01**), I did not feel quite satisfied with the big black shape in the foreground (see **Fig.05**).

This is when I started to add a slope to the piece (**Fig.08**).

I also added some more lighting to the scene at this point. Getting a cool bounce light off the ground really added some drama to a piece and it also gave me a chance to use a hot spot on the ground, which could be further used to highlight the cowboy. I also started to add color to the piece during this phase, using layers set to Soft Light and Lighten, which are favorites of mine. I also used Color Balance to shift the entire piece into color and out of the gray zone it had been in until now.

Fig.08

Side note: If you haven't already noticed, I knew where I wanted to put the cowboy. This may seem kind of weird, in that I like to block out things beforehand. However, because I was using that first sketch as a starting point, I knew where I wanted to go with it. At this stage I could basically see the cowboy in the piece. It was one more element just waiting to appear. Up until this point I'd just been setting everything up just right.

> " DRAWING AND PAINTING A HORSE IS HARD ENOUGH, BUT INCLUDING A RIDER JUST ADDS TO THE PAIN "

Cowboy 2
The cowboy finally arrived at this point (**Fig.09**).

I started rough and just kept on going until something looked right. Having reference pictures of people riding horses to hand helps a ton. Drawing and painting a horse is hard enough, but including a rider just adds to the pain. Also, I hadn't really painted the final lighting into the scene yet. I was just using generic lighting at this point, trying to get things to look right. The dynamic lighting

Fig.09

came later, when I was comfortable with what I had. You can see the different brush strokes and the roughness in the close up shown in **Fig.10**. Even though it was rough I tried to make sure each stroke counted so that I wasn't just making a mess.

> " BY UNDERSTANDING THE ELEMENTS I WANTED TO PLAY WITH I WAS ABLE TO GET A SENSE OF MOVEMENT AND DIRECTION "

Final
Here I added the final touches. At the end I like to tweak certain things such as the color and contrast. I try to make sure things stand out and "pop" in the final piece. I also dropped the main sandworm back so that it rested firmly on its own in the space in the piece. Having the dusty clouds in there sort of blended the two together, taking away some of the scale of the sandworm. Adding a shadow to the cowboy helped emphasize the highlights around him. The final thing I did was to smudge some tall grass into the foreground to add some interest there (**Fig.11**).

Fig.10

CONCLUSION, ENDING, ETC. ...
This was an exercise in trying to create an exciting composition. Using and being aware of the components involved with the piece helped immensely. By understanding the elements I wanted to play with I was able to get a sense of movement and direction. I was also able to establish lighting that helped convey depth and scale and, in the end, I was able to draw a cowboy riding with some sandworms.

Fig.11

ARTIST PORTFOLIO

All Images © Kekai Kotaki

DIGITAL ART MASTERS

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Is a resource website for the CG community; amongst our growing number of products for CG artists, we produce two monthly downloadable PDF magazines – *2DArtist* and *3DCreative*. We are based in the West Midlands, in the UK, and our intention with our magazines is to make each issue as full of great articles, images, interviews and tutorials as possible. If you would like more information on 3DTotal or our magazines, or if you have a question for one our team, please use the links below.

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